



Southern Creole Okra “Gumbo”

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 40 / **Cook Time** 30 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

mash: to reduce food, like potatoes or bananas, to a soft, pulpy state by beating or pressure.

mince: to chop into teeny tiny pieces.

slice: to cut into thin pieces using a sawing motion with your knife.

Equipment

- Small bowl
- Measuring spoons
- Cutting board + kid-safe knife
- Can opener
- Potato masher
- Large skillet
- Wooden spoon

Ingredients

Southern Creole Okra “Gumbo”

- Creole Spice Mix:
- 2 dried bay leaves (crushed—by hand is okay!)

- 1/2 tsp mild paprika
- 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning (or any blend of basil, thyme, and oregano)
- 1/2 tsp onion powder (or garlic powder)
- 1 tiny pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 tiny pinch nutmeg
- Gumbo:
- 2 garlic cloves (or 1 tsp garlic powder)
- 3 green onions (or 1/2 small onion)
- 2 celery stalks
- 1 red or green bell pepper
- 3 T butter or olive oil
- 1 can red kidney beans
- 2 large ripe tomatoes or 1 14-oz can diced tomatoes
- 8 fresh okra pods (or frozen and thawed okra or 1 14-oz can okra, rinsed)
- 1 1/2 to 2 C veggie broth
- 1 T Creole Spice Mix (see ingredients above)
- 2 tsp sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 T vinegar
- 1 tsp mild paprika + more, if needed for color

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Instructions

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measure + mix

In a small bowl, measure 1/2 teaspoon of your choice of the following spices to make 2 tablespoons of the Creole Spice Mix: **2 crushed bay leaves, 1/2 tsp paprika, 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning, 1/2 tsp onion powder, 1 tiny pinch of cayenne pepper, and 1 tiny pinch of nutmeg.** You'll use 1 tablespoon of the Creole Spice Mix for the Gumbo and 1 tablespoon for the Slightly Spiced Dirty Rice (see recipe)!

mince + chop

Peel and mince **2 garlic cloves.** Chop **3 green onions, 2 celery stalks, 1 bell pepper, and 2 tomatoes.**

slice + mash

Slice **8 fresh okra pods.** Drain and rinse **1 can of red kidney beans,** then use a potato masher to break them up in a bowl! Tip: Don't wash your okra until just before you're ready to slice and cook it, or you'll have a gooey mess!

sauté + add + simmer

Heat **3 tablespoons of butter or olive oil** in a large skillet. Add the minced garlic and chopped onion, celery, and bell pepper, then sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Next, add the chopped tomatoes, mashed beans, sliced okra, **1 1/2 to 2 cups of vegetable stock,** and **1 tablespoon of the Creole Spice Mix.** Bring to a boil, then simmer uncovered until it becomes thick and veggies are very soft. Simmer for at least 30 minutes and up to an hour.

add + season + taste

Add **2 teaspoons salt, 2 teaspoons sugar,** and **1 tablespoon vinegar** to your gumbo. Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve topped with Slightly Spiced Dirty Rice (see recipe)!

Featured Ingredient: Okra!

Hi! I'm Okra!

"Hi! My name's Okra! You may not be familiar with me yet, but I'm a popular ingredient in the cuisines of the southern US, especially gumbo. I can be a bit slimy, especially if I get too moist—wouldn't you if it was really humid?! Cooking me with something acidic, like tomato and vinegar helps. I'm often referred to as a "lady's finger" because of my shape. That makes me laugh!"

History

Okra is believed to have originated in Africa, and its name is derived from an African language! Egyptians first cultivated the plant, and it spread through North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. Okra first came to the United States in the early 1700s with the slave trade. Okra is considered the "world traveler" of vegetables! That's because it's used in recipes and dishes around the world.

Southern soldiers used to drink a coffee substitute made from dried and ground okra seeds during the Civil War.

Anatomy

An okra plant can grow as tall as 6½ feet high! They produce edible pods that are long and thin and come to a point at the end. Their shape gave them the nickname “ladies’ fingers.” They look more like witches’ fingers!

If you cut a cross-section of an okra pod, you’ll see that the seeds are arranged in a pattern that looks like a flower. Because it has seeds, okra is technically a fruit! But in the kitchen, it is considered a vegetable.

Okra comes in two varieties: red and green! When you cook red okra, it turns green.

Okra plants produce beautiful white flowers with dark purple centers.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Okra thrives in warm, temperate weather and can tolerate high heat and drought.

The parts of the okra plant you can eat are its green pods, seeds, and leaves!

Okra can be pickled, canned, stewed, grilled, fried, pan-seared, and roasted.

Okra contains soluble fiber, which, when cooked, results in a gelatinous goo that cooks use to thicken dishes.

Okra seeds are pressed and processed into oil used for cooking.

Old or mature okra is used to make paper and rope!

When buying okra fresh, choose medium-small pods as they’re more tender and less stringy.

Okra can be steeped in water overnight to make a delicious tea!

Don’t wash your okra until just before you’re ready to cook it, or you might end up with a gooey mess!

Nutrition

Fiber! Okra has lots of fiber to help keep our intestines clean and digestion running smoothly!

B-Vitamins! B vitamins help the body use the food we’ve eaten for energy!

Antioxidants! Okra has high levels of these nutrients that support our immune system, keep us from getting sick, help us stay strong, and help us grow!