

Okra

History

The okra plant comes from Africa, particularly Ethiopia. It arrived in Louisiana in 1700. The okra plant grows 3-6 feet tall and produces a hibiscus-like flower. Pods should be picked when they are 2-3 inches - longer pods are tough. An okra plant needs to have pods removed at least every other day because new pods grow daily. Okra excretes a slimy mucus that can be used to help thicken soups. It is a popular vegetable in the southern United States.

Okra is a great source of soluble fiber, which helps lower blood cholesterol and the risk of heart disease. Okra also contains insoluble fiber which keeps the digestive tract regular.

Preparation

It seems like frying okra is the most popular way to eat it, but there are other delicious and light ways to prepare okra. Try:

- Roasting with spices in the oven
- Grilling
- Sautéing with other vegetables
- Stewing in a soup or gumbo
- Baking into a casserole or dish
- Substituting okra for zucchini

Fun Facts

- Okra also goes by the name “gumbo” or “lady’s fingers.”
- “Gumbo” is Swahili for “okra.”
- It is in the same family as hollyhock, hibiscus, and certain roses.



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