



Using, Storing and Preserving



Okra

Prepared by:

Joyce McGarry, Extension educator



Okra (also known as gumbo) is a tall-growing, warm-season, annual vegetable. Set transplants in the garden after the soil has warmed and the danger of frost has past.

Recommended varieties

Annie Oakley (hybrid; 52 days to harvest; compact plant; extra tender)

Dwarf Green Long Pod (52 days; ribbed pods)

Clemson Spineless (56 days)

Yield

One bushel of okra weighs 26 pounds and yields 16 to 18 quarts—an average of 1½ pounds per quart.

Storage and Food Safety

Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Wet pods will quickly mold and become slimy. Okra will

keep for only two or three days. When ridges and tips of pods turn dark, it needs to be used immediately. Once it starts to darken, it will quickly deteriorate.

To prevent cross-contamination, keep okra away from raw meat and meat juices.

Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.

For best quality and nutritional value, do not preserve more than your family can consume in 12 months.

How to Preserve

Canning

Select young, tender pods. Wash pods and trim ends. Leave whole or cut into 1-inch pieces. Place okra in saucepan and cover with hot water, boil 2 minutes and drain. Pack hot okra into hot jars. Add ½ teaspoon salt to pints, 1 teaspoon to quarts, if desired.

Lawn or garden questions?

Visit migarden.msu.edu.
Call toll-free 1-888-678-3464.

Using, Storing and Preserving Okra

Fill jars to 1 inch from the top with boiling water, remove air bubbles, wipe jar rims, and adjust lids and process (see tables below for recommended processing times).

Let jars stand undisturbed for 24 hours. Remove rings. Wash jars, label, date and store. Food in jars that did not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid or refrigerated.

Freezing

Select young, tender pods, no longer than 2 to 2½ inches. Okra that is at peak quality for eating is best for freezing. Wash and trim stems of okra pods, leaving caps whole. Drop pods into boiling water, cover and blanch small pods 3 minutes and large pods 5 minutes.* Cool promptly and drain. Leave whole or slice crosswise. Package, leaving ½ inch headspace, seal, label and freeze.

***Water blanching:** Use 1 gallon of water per pound of prepared okra. Put okra in blanching basket or strainer

and lower into boiling water. Place lid on pan/blancher. Return water to boiling and start counting blanching time as soon as water returns to a boil. It should take only a minute to come back to a boil. If it takes longer, too much okra has been put in the boiling water.

References

Wolford, R., and D. Banks. 2013. "Okra." Watch Your Garden Grow. University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Available at urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/okra.cfm

Andress, Elizabeth and Judy A. Harrison. *So Easy to Preserve*. Bulletin 989, 6th Edition. Cooperative Extension University of Georgia, 2014.

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/mi_fresh.

Recommended process time for okra in a dial-gauge pressure canner:

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
			0-2,000 feet	2,001-4,000 feet	4,001-6,000 feet	6,001-8,000 feet
Hot	Pints	25 min.	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.
	Quarts	40 min.	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.

Recommended process time for okra in a weighted-gauge pressure canner:

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
			0-1,000 feet	Above 1,000 feet
Hot	Pints	25 min.	10 lb.	15 lb.
	Quarts	40 min.	10 lb.	15 lb.