



## Using, Storing and Preserving

# Okra

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**O**kra (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 passed.

## Yield

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

## Food Safety and Storage

- 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.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash okra under cool running water. Do not use soap.

- Keep okra away from raw meat and juices to prevent cross-contamination.
- 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?**

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Fill hot jars with fresh boiling water, leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles, wipe jar rims with clean paper towel, adjust headspace if needed, and adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

Let jars stand undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours. Remove rings. Wash jars, label, date and store.

### Freezing

The smooth-type varieties of okra freeze as well as or better than the ridged varieties because they do not split as easily. Select young, tender pods and separate into small pods (4 inches or under) and large pods. Wash. Remove the stems at the end of the seed cells, being careful not to expose the seed cell. Drop pods into boiling water, cover and water blanch\* small pods 3 minutes and large pods 4 minutes. Cool in ice water for 3 or 4 minutes (same number of minutes as blanching was done) and drain. Leave whole, or slice crosswise. Package, leaving ½- to 1½-inch headspace dependent on container type. Seal, label, date 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 or 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

Andress, E., & Harrison, J. A. (2014). *So easy to preserve* (Bulletin 989). (6th ed.). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

Wolford, R., & Banks, D. (2013). Okra. *Watch your garden grow*. University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

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### Recommended process time (in minutes) for okra in a dial-gauge pressure canner:

			Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	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 (in minutes) for okra in a weighted-gauge pressure canner:

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