

# Vegetable Main Dish Recipes Vol. 17

## Okra : Promoting Body Balance and Digestive Health

Rich in vitamins and minerals, okra is so nourishing that some regions treat it as a medicinal plant. Its “sticky” character helps regulate the intestinal environment.

By Makiko Hei

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### Nutritional value of Okra

Okra contains many nutrients such as  $\beta$ -carotene, folic acid, potassium, calcium, and magnesium (Refer to the table below). The characteristic stickiness comes from pectin, a soluble dietary fiber that helps regulate the intestinal environment, slowing the absorption of carbohydrates to reduce blood sugar spikes, and lowering serum cholesterol levels.

### How to identify good okra

- Color: Bright, shiny green pods are best. Avoid those with brownish discoloration around the calyx (the hard part between the stem and the seed pod) or at the cut end.
- Fuzz: A surface well covered with fuzz is a sign of freshness.
- Size: Smaller ones are tastier and more tender.

### Preparation of okra

- (1) Cut off a few millimeters from the top of the cap and remove the fuzz by *itazuri* (placing the okra on a cutting board, sprinkling with some salt, and

rolling it with the palm of your hand).

- (2) Rinse off the fuzz along with the salt.

- (3) Wipe with a paper towel and bevel the surface of the calyx.

### How to store okra

**Refrigerated storage** : Wrap okra in paper towels, place it in an airtight bag, and store it in the vegetable compartment of the refrigerator. The standard storage period is 4-5 days (Can be stored the same way after the preparation). For longer storage, it should be frozen .

**Freezer storage** : After the preparation as mentioned above, wrap 3-4 pieces in plastic wrap, place them in an airtight bag, and freeze. When cooking, they can be cut and cooked while frozen. Use it up in about one month. Or, after the preparation, they can be cut into convenient sizes and frozen for later use.



### Nutrients found in okra and their benefits

Nutrient	Effect
$\beta$ -carotene	Converts to vitamin A in the body, and effective in maintaining immunity, and promotes the health of eyes, mucous membranes, skin, and hair
Folic acid	Helps prevent anemia
Potassium	Helps expel excess salt from the body
Calcium	Builds bones and teeth
Magnesium	Activates various enzymes in the body and is involved in muscle contraction

## Pork *Shabu Shabu* and Shredded Okra with Sesame *Miso*

Pork is another fatigue-relieving food like okra. Their double effect will leave you feeling energized and full of vitality!

**Cooking time: 25 minutes**

**[Ingredients]** 2 servings

200g pork (very thinly sliced)

10 pieces of okra (90-100g)

2 teaspoons salt

1 tablespoon *sake*

(A)

1 tablespoon ground white sesame seeds

1 tablespoon *miso*

1/2 teaspoon soy sauce

2 teaspoons rice vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

1 tablespoon sesame oil



### [How to cook]

1. Measure and mix ingredients in (A) in a bowl. Wash okra and wipe dry with a paper towel. Cut off a few millimeters from the top of the cap and bevel the surface of the calyx. Remove the fuzz from the outside of the pods using a method called *itazuri* (Refer to page 22).
2. Cut (1) okra in half lengthwise, then julienne into thin strips. Boil 1 liter water in a pot, add 2 teaspoon salt, and boil okra for 30 seconds. Drain it in a colander and cool it quickly by fanning it. ※ Do not discard the water.
3. Add 1 tablespoon *sake* to (2) hot water, add the pork, and when the color changes, drain in a colander and wipe dry with a paper towel.
4. Add (2) okra and (3) pork in a bowl containing (A) sauce and mix together. Place in a serving bowl and sprinkle with whole white sesame seeds (not included in the above ingredient list).

2-1



2-2



4



### Tips

- The amount of salt for *itazuri* is about 1/4 teaspoon of salt for 5 pieces of okra.
- Be careful not to overcook thinly sliced okra, as it softens quickly.
- The absorption rate of B-carotene increases when okra is consumed with oil.

## Korean Okra Pancakes

The potato gives them a delightful chunky texture

**Cooking time: 25 minutes**

**[Ingredients]** 21 cm x 1 sheet

10 pieces of okra

2 teaspoons + 1 teaspoon sesame oil

### [Batter]

1 egg

110g potato, peeled and grated

2 tablespoons flour

3g dried bonito shavings

1/4 teaspoon salt

### [Sauce] \*Easy-to-prepare portions

1/2 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

1/2 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon white sesame seeds

A few red pepper rings (or Chili oil) to taste



### [How to cook]

1. Remove the fuzz on the outside of the okra pods with a method called *itazuri* (Refer to page 22), rinse well, and drain. Cut off the calyx and cut into small pieces 5 mm thick. Combine the ingredients for the sauce.
2. Beat an egg in a bowl, then add the remaining batter ingredients and mix well. Add (1) okra, and mix lightly.
3. Put 2 teaspoons of sesame oil in a frying pan over medium heat, pour in (2), and spread it around. After 1 minute of cooking, shake the pan and if the batter starts to firm up a bit, drizzle an additional 1 teaspoon of sesame oil on the side of the pan and brown it. Turn the pancake over and cook for 3 minutes on the other side, pressing down with a spatula.
4. Move the pancake to a cutting board, cut into bite-size pieces, place on a plate, and garnish with sauce.



### Tips

- Using fresh green chilies instead of red ones is also recommended.
- It tastes better if you add sesame oil and crisp it up during cooking.

### Profile

#### Makiko Hei

I love vegetables. I try to handle them with care and cook them simply but luxuriously, with the motto "Let's make our daily meals delicious regardless of the genre of the dishes."

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