

Gourmet Vegetables

Okra

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Feed the Family



(Abelmoschus esculentus)



DESCRIPTION

Okra is a tall, warm-growing, annual vegetable that comes from the cotten and hibiscus family. The Okra plant produces pods which are cut when they are 5-7.6cm / 2-3 in long while they are still tender and immature. The pods are said to have a mild flavor with an unusual texture. The plant grows 0.9-1.8m / 3-6 ft high with leaves that are 10-20cm / 3.9-7.9in long. The Okra plant also flowers, giving it ornamental value in any garden. Okra is said to originate from Africa and were first brought to America by African slaves. The plant produces heavy yields of up to .5kg/35.3oz.

'Red Okra' Torpedo-shaped red okra are two to five inches long. Offering a unique flavor and texture, the fresh taste is somewhere between eggplant and asparagus. 75-80 days.



USES

The immature pods can be eaten raw in salads or cooked on their own. They are also found in soups and stews and can be boiled, fried, pickled, frozen and canned. The distinct flavor of the Okra is said to go well with tomatoes and eggplant.



GROWTH

The Okra is a warm-weathered plant and does best in hot / tropical conditions. Although the plant can grow in a variety of different soils it is recommended to grow the vegetable in soil that is well drained and fertilized. When preparing the soil, allow up to 2 months for the fertilizer in the soil to break down before planting. Plants should be sown no more than 2.5cm/1in deep in single rows around 30.5-76cm / 12-20 in apart. In order to accelerate germination, seeds should be soaked overnight. For best results, plant with basil and peppers.



CULTIVATION

For best results, Okra fruits should be picked when they are still tender and immature (5-7.6cm / 2-3 in long). This usually occurs around 9-11 weeks after harvesting. When growing Okra, you must ensure that you handle the plant and fruit carefully as the fruits are very easily bruised. To keep your Okra fruits in the best condition, ensure that you cool the pods immediately after they have been harvested. It is recommended that growers pick the fruits every 3-4 days to prevent the fruit from becoming tough and unpleasant to eat. The hair on the Okra fruit is known to irritate the skin so wearing gloves when harvesting is recommended. The Okra plant is prone to disease and illness, some of which include damage from Aphids and Cabbage worm. Aphids can be treated with systematic fertilizers and sprays and Cabbage worms can be treated with Dipel (Bacillus thuringiensis) and the use of row covers.



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Any enquiries can be directed to:
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