

# Southern Stewed Okra & Tomatoes



No one truly knows where okra first came from. Scientists believe the growing of the okra plant began as early as 12th century BC in Ethiopia. The plant most likely made it to the Southern United States with the beginnings of the slave trade in the 1500s.

The farming of the okra plant on Southern soil allowed ancient Western African culinary and agricultural traditions to continue. "Gumbo" is Swahili for okra. The plant lends its unique texture to various soups and stews as the roux – providing thickness to a combination of vegetables and proteins. Variations of these ancient dishes became Louisiana's roux gumbo, South Carolina and Georgia's roux-less gumbo, and Maryland's crab gumbo. Other dishes like fried and stewed okra with tomatoes soon became a hallmark of African American and Southern cuisine.

## INGREDIENTS *MAKES 8 SIDE SERVINGS*

- 4 thick slices of bacon, cut into pieces
- 1 medium/large onion, diced
- 1 (28 oz.) can diced tomatoes with juice (or fresh!)
- 1.5-2 lbs. fresh okra, sliced
- 2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder (or substitute fresh minced garlic)
- *optional* 1/2 teaspoon Creole seasoning

## DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by sautéing the bacon pieces until browned over medium heat. Remove the cooked bacon and reserve for garnish later.
2. In the same pan, add the diced onion to the bacon fat rendered and sauté for 2-3 minutes until softened.
3. Next, add in the canned diced tomatoes and the sliced okra. Stir to combine.
4. Add the stock and seasonings. Stir to combine.
5. Bring to a simmer. Cover and cook for 20-30 minutes. Make sure to not overcook.
6. Serve hot topped with bacon pieces as a side dish or topped over cooked rice.
7. Enjoy!

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# *What is "Local" and Why Buy It?*

"Local" can be defined in many ways, but one of the most common factors used to define local is the distance from the point of production to the point of sale. Some would define local as "within 250 miles" while others may define it as "Arizona grown". While the price of local goods may be higher upfront, it costs less in the long run through its community benefits and added value. Buying local is a way to practice conscious consumerism as it is a more sustainable option in terms of the planet, people, and profit.

- **Less Environmental Impact**

Sourcing locally reduces the environmental impact of transportation costs associated with our food and other goods. It takes less gas, and thus puts fewer greenhouse emissions into the air, to drive a truck of apples from town to town, as opposed to across the nation or globe. Buying local helps mitigate the effects of climate change.

- **Better for Our Health**

Because of the shorter transit distance, local foods are also more likely to be fresh upon arrival, and more nutrient-dense compared to items that are transported over long distances. We can also feel the benefits of a stronger sense of community and connecting to where our food comes from. Additionally, the reduced impact on climate change is beneficial for our long term health.

- **Strengthens the Local Economy**

Purchasing from locally owned businesses directly impacts the local economy and surrounding communities. When we buy from these small-scale, independent businesses, rather than national chains, a significantly greater portion of our money is then cycled back through our local economy. Small local companies are the largest employer nationally and provide the most jobs to residents. Our purchases can directly impact our friends' businesses, aid our neighbors in need, and to support our local producers.

- **Ethical Practices and Community Benefit**

Buying local contributes to improved public infrastructure, and is an investment in your community both socially and economically. Additionally, local products are more likely to be ethically sourced, follow organic trades, and support fair labor wages, diversity, and inclusion. Studies show that the increasing size of corporations are driving inequality, while local and dispersed business ownership strengthens the middle class. Local businesses also donate more money per sale to local nonprofits compared to large, national competitors - ultimately strengthening the base of our whole community.