

# THE BETTER LIVING DIARIES

August 2023- issue 8

Hi there,  
I'm Amber.

I am a farmer's wife,  
mother, foodie, and an  
extension agent!

Better Living for Texans program provides  
research and evidence-based nutrition,  
health and wellness knowledge to empower  
individuals, families, and communities to  
make positive changes for healthier lives



## ENJOY YOUR HARVEST

### Okra

#### HOW TO SELECT THEM...

Choose okra pods that are **bright green** and **firm** for the best flavor. It is best to avoid choosing pods that are tough and fibrous. They will be bitter and difficult to eat. Store fresh okra in a plastic produce bag in the refrigerator for no longer than **three days**.

#### TRICKS FOR PREPARING THEM...

**Rinse** okra under **running water** before use. **Cut off the stem** portion of the pod and discard. If you have an abundance of okra, it freezes well. Many people do not like to cook okra because it can become slimy when boiled, but that is not the only way to prepare okra! It can also be **baked, steamed, fried, pickled, stewed, or roasted**.

#### NUTRITION FACTS:

- Low-calorie food (approximately 30 calories per cup of raw okra)
- Good source of fiber and Vitamin C
- Helps lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease

Swipe for recipes >>>>>>

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Check out this okra from the community  
garden  
at Homestead Senior Apartments

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BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

# OVEN ROASTED OKRA

## WHAT YOU NEED:

Serves: 3 | Total prep time: 30 minutes

- 1 pound okra, cut into 1/3 inch slices
- 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Optional: lemon wedges for serving



Source: <https://thishealthytable.com/blog/oven-roasted-okra/>

# OVEN ROASTED OKRA

## INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil or parchment paper.
3. Toss sliced okra in a bowl with olive oil, salt, garlic powder, paprika, and black pepper.
4. Place okra on baking sheet in a single layer.
5. Roast in the oven for 15 minutes or until edges of okra are browned.
6. Serve immediately with optional lemon slices.

Source: <https://thishealthytable.com/blog/oven-roasted-okra/>

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## *Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities*

**The Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities Garden Course, which is funded, in part, by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), helps increase the availability of fresh produce through teaching participants how to grow fruits and vegetables in community and backyard gardens. The gardening series includes topics such as how to select the right garden location, planting and watering techniques, controlling insects, and composting. By incorporating cooking demonstrations using the produce grown, participants learn how to prepare the produce they harvest. This program is ongoing with Lubbock Senior Center, Homestead Senior Apartments, Mae Simmons Senior Center, Maggie Trejo Senior Center, and Copper Rawlings Center.**



# What's new

*Learn, Grow, Eat, Go in partnership  
with Cultivate, Cook, Create at the  
South Plains Foodbank Grub Farm*

*This is a 10-week gardening and nutrition series that is ongoing through August 9th. This series uses the Learn, Grow, Eat, Go curriculum. This series is used to motivate youth through cooking, gardening, and nutrition to have a better understanding of and appreciation for nutrient dense foods. Along with other agents, Cory Edwards, Ashlyn Aljoe, Christina Reid, and two interns from Texas Tech, Amber has had the opportunity to this program to 50 youth at the South Plains Food Bank Grub Farm.*



# *Pick Your Produce... Fresh, Frozen, or Canned!*

**Did you know fruits and vegetables can be enjoyed in a variety of ways? When comparing the nutritional value of fresh, frozen, and canned produce, research continues to show that each form COUNTS toward a healthy diet or eating pattern! Choosing fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables increases how many options there are at the store and can help save time and money when shopping. Let's talk about shopping tips for each!**

**Sometimes fresh fruits and vegetables are not widely available and can cost more depending on the season and where you live. Additionally, some fresh produce travels very far to our stores and can lose nutrients in transit and potentially spoil quicker. To extend the shelf-life of fruits and vegetables, freezing or canning options are available. In processing/preserving fruits and vegetables, the produce is picked at its peak freshness in both flavor and nutrients and then processed accordingly. During processing, some fruits and vegetables lose nutrients, when compared to fresh produce but the change is minimal. Equally, there are some fruits or vegetables with more nutrients available when frozen or canned as fresh items begin to lose nutrients once picked. Again, these differences are minor and vary between different fruits and vegetables!**

**When shopping, compare prices and consider other factors such as convenience and time. For a quick dinner, heating up a can of green beans will save time versus preparing fresh green beans; yet fresh baby carrots may be preferred for school lunches compared to canned carrots. Look for products with “no added salt” and “no added sugar.” These ingredients may be added during processing. However, if you buy canned vegetables with salt added, you can remove extra salt by rinsing vegetables under cool running water in a colander. Doing so can decrease the sodium content by 25-40%!**

**Pick what is best for you and your family while maximizing your food budget. Remember, all fresh, frozen, or canned produce counts!**

Written by: Heidi Fowler, RD, LD – Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Content Source: Have a Plant: About the Buzz: Frozen and Canned Fruit and Vegetables VS Fresh



# Pack a Safe Lunch

*Extension Nutrition and Food Science Program*

Taking your lunch to school or work is a great way to save money. It is also a good way to use leftovers from last night's dinner.

When packing a lunch that will be eaten several hours later, remember these food safety tips so the lunch you pack doesn't make you or your family sick.

## **Don't get bugged by your lunch**

Keeping bacteria away from your food can greatly lower your chance of getting a foodborne illness. Follow these guidelines to help prevent bacteria from spreading:

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before preparing lunch.
- Clean all food-preparation areas, including the countertops.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them in the lunch. This includes produce that has skins and rinds that will not be eaten.



What's  
in your  
sack?

## **Keep hot foods *HOT*, cold foods *COLD*.**

Bacteria that cause foodborne illness grow best at temperatures between 40 and 140 degrees F. This is known as the temperature danger zone.

To slow bacterial growth, keep perishable foods out of the temperature danger zone until it is time to eat.

Perishable foods include meat, cheese, eggs, poultry, milk and other dairy foods, and fresh-cut fruit and vegetables. Do not leave perishable foods at room temperature for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is 90 degrees F or above.



**COLD:** Keep cold foods cold, including meat, eggs, lunch meat, cheese, milk, and cut fruit, and cooked pasta, vegetables, and rice. Use ice packs, freezer gels, or frozen juice boxes to keep the foods cold until lunch.

**HOT:** Use a wide-mouth insulated bottle to keep foods such as soup and chili hot. Pour boiling water into the bottle to heat the inside. Then heat the food

# Back to School

to 165 degrees F. Drain the boiling water from the bottle and replace with the hot food.

If you are worried about keeping perishable foods out of the danger zone, consider packing foods that can be stored safely at room temperature:

- Nuts
- Peanut butter
- Juice boxes
- Unopened canned meat
- Beef jerky
- Dried and canned fruit
- Chips
- Whole fruit
- Breads and cereals
- Jam, jelly, and honey

### **Other tips**

Keep lunch boxes clean. Wash them with soap and warm water after each use.

If you use paper bags, only use those labeled for lunch use. Plastic bags from grocery and other stores



*Freshly cut fruit spoils quicker than whole fruit.*



can become contaminated and should not be used to carry lunches. Do not reuse plastic bags or wrap.

Keep lunches out of direct sunlight or other heat sources.

Throw away any leftover perishable foods. Do not save them for a later meal or the next day's lunch.

Use only the leftovers that have been in the refrigerator for less than 1 or 2 days.

### **Acknowledgment**

*Peggy Van Laanen, former Extension Specialist, wrote the original manuscript for this publication.*

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