

**Peppers  
Okra  
Sweet Corn**

# Seasonal Eating

**August**

**THIS MONTH I USED THE FEATURED PRODUCE ON THESE DAYS:**

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## Sweet Summer Peppers

The term “sweet pepper” refers to a variety of mild peppers. Sweet peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C with a medium bell pepper providing about 190% of the daily value. The best known are the bell peppers, named for their bell-like shape. They are very juicy, sweet and crisp and come in green, yellow, orange, purple, red and brown colors. The red are simply vine-ripened green bell peppers that develop a super sweet flavor. The large, red, heart-shaped pimiento is another popular sweet pepper which can sometimes be found fresh but more often canned in strips or pieces. The long, tapered Cubanelle pepper (or Italian sweet) is yellowish green when young but if allowed to fully ripen turns bright red. It has a thinner flesh than the bell peppers and is used extensively in Puerto Rican cuisine. Sweet banana peppers are also popular, especially as a sandwich or pizza topping. They have a much thinner flesh than the bell peppers, grow well in the backyard garden and are great for home pickling.



- Slice up fresh green bell peppers or sweet banana peppers and add to a sandwich for an added crunch
- Sauté red and green bell peppers with onions in a little olive oil to top an Italian or Polish sausage in a bun
- Make your favorite meatloaf recipe or a mixture of rice, browned ground beef and tomato sauce and stuff into pepper halves before baking
- Use strips of sweet peppers to dip into ranch dressing instead of chips
- Marinate peppers, onions and sliced beef or chicken in a fajita marinade and broil before serving on flour tortillas with a little cheese and sour cream

## Okra: A Southern Tradition

Okra was initially introduced to the United States in its southern region and therefore is associated with Southern, Creole and Cajun cooking. It is traditionally found in Gumbo, stewed with tomatoes, boiled and fried. Pickling okra is a good way to preserve an excess harvest for later. When picking okra, choose the younger, smaller pods that are 2-3 inches long as the older, more mature pods become tough and stringy. If you cannot use your okra the same day as purchased, store it in the warmest part of the refrigerator in a paper bag as cold temperatures and washing the pods will speed up decay. Okra can have a chemical reaction with pans made of iron, copper or brass which turns the okra black, so avoid these when cooking. Infamous for its slime, try to use the pods whole and avoid overcooking to reduce this tendency. Combining okra with other ingredients, as in a stew, will also help reduce the slime and make okra a star on your summer table.

### Did You Know?

- Okra was brought to the American South by Ethiopian slaves.
- Peppers, both sweet and hot, originated in Central and South America. They were not introduced into Europe until the 16th century.
- The average ear of corn has 800 kernels, arranged in 16 rows. There is one piece of silk for each kernel.
- Okra is also known as bamia, bindi, bhindi, lady's finger and gumbo.

## Pepper Steak

1 1/2 pounds beef sirloin steaks  
1/4 cup vegetable oil  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
3 large green bell peppers, sliced  
2 large onions, thinly sliced  
1/4 cup soy sauce  
1/2 teaspoon sugar  
1/2 cup beef bouillon  
1 (6-ounce) can sliced water chestnuts, drained  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
1/4 cup cold water  
4 green onions, cut into 1 inch pieces  
Hot cooked white rice

Slice the steak into 1/8 inch thick slices. Heat oil in skillet, add garlic, salt, pepper and ginger. Sauté until garlic is golden. Add steak slices, brown lightly 2 minutes; remove meat. Add green peppers and onions, cook 3 minutes. Return beef to pan; add soy sauce, sugar, bouillon, water chestnuts, cornstarch dissolved in cold water and green onions. Simmer 2 minutes or until sauce thickens. Serve over hot rice.

## Fire Roasted Corn Salsa

4 ears sweet corn  
1/2 cup chopped green onions  
1/2 cup sliced black olives (or black beans)  
1/2 cup diced green bell peppers  
1/2 cup diced red bell peppers  
1/2 cup diced tomatoes  
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro  
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
2-3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
1/2 jalapeño pepper, diced  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

Clean corn and blanch in boiling water until halfway cooked, about 5 minutes. Put a little oil on the ears and grill corn until roasted. Place in refrigerator and chill. Cut the cooled corn off the cob into a mixing bowl. Add green onions, black olives, peppers, tomatoes, cilantro, coriander, garlic, lemon juice, jalapeño and olive oil. Mix well and season with salt and pepper. Chill until ready to serve. Serve with chips or sprinkle on a green salad with grilled chicken strips on top and a balsamic vinaigrette or oil and vinegar dressing.

## Corn Tips

To remove the silk from the corn ears, use a damp paper towel. Hold close to the ear and pull it downward along the kernels to remove even stubborn silks that may be left behind. You can also use a soft brush to remove the silks without damaging the kernels.

To cut the kernels off the cob, stand the point of the ear in the center hole of a Bundt pan. Hold by the stem and using a chef's knife, slice downward from the stem to the point, cutting off about 2/3rds of each kernel. Turn the corn and repeat all the way around. You can scrape down the cob with the back of the knife to remove the remainder of the kernel to make creamed corn or simply use the whole kernels you cut off.

Boil the cobs in water to use as the base of a corn chowder.

## Basque Vegetable Rice

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper  
1 medium onion, quartered and thinly sliced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 large ripe tomatoes, seeded and diced  
1 medium zucchini, diced  
1 red bell pepper, diced  
1 green bell pepper, diced  
1 cup thinly sliced fresh okra  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon dried thyme  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 1/4 cups short grained white rice (Valencia or Arborio)  
3 cups chicken broth  
2 tablespoons minced fresh flat leaf parsley

Heat oil in a large skillet with a lid, over medium heat. Add red pepper, onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until the onion is soft but not browned, about 6 minutes. Add tomatoes, zucchini, bell peppers, okra, paprika, thyme, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Add rice. Stir to coat well with the vegetable mixture. Add broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until the rice is tender, 25-30 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley to garnish for serving.