

**Seasonal Eating**  
**Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent**

**A Twist on Okra**  
**August 2017**

Okra is one of those quintessentially southern vegetables. I had never heard of it until I moved to the south. Now whenever we have visitors from the north, okra is on the menu as a new experience.

For years I enjoyed fried okra. In fact it was the only way I would eat it. Crunchy on the outside, soft in the middle and sweet. Then I started branching out, adding it to dishes with other ingredients. Boiled okra was just too slimy on its own. I had heard about roasting okra but wasn't really sure about that. Would it get crispy like fried okra? Would it be slimy? How would it taste with no coating on it?

So one day when I had an overabundance of okra from the farmers market and wanted a quick side, I took the plunge and tried it. Would it get crispy? Yes! Would it be slimy? No! How would it taste? Sweet, intense with caramelized spots – Wow! Like so many vegetables, the dry heat of roasting really brings out the flavor and transforms them into something special. If you are looking for another way to eat okra, roasting is definitely the way to go and it is so easy. No heating up oil. No breading and waiting. Just a toss and into the oven. Stir a few times to evenly brown and you have a side dish.

I just toss mine in the oil and sprinkle with a little salt and pepper. After researching other recipes, many add a little garlic powder or paprika or even some cayenne pepper if you like the heat. So season as you like.

The smaller pods tend to be more tender (unless you have a specialty variety like Star of David which are really big around but still tender). Dry the pods well after rinsing so they don't steam. If you are doing a lot of okra, divide onto two baking sheets so they are in a single layer. It will take anywhere from 10-25 minutes, depending on the moisture content and size of the okra. I cut mine but you can also roast them whole or cut in half lengthwise like okra fries.

With the warm summer weather, okra will be here soon so try a new twist and roast some this year.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating ([bedford.tennessee.edu](http://bedford.tennessee.edu)).



## **Oven Roasted Okra**

1 pound okra

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Kosher salt

Black pepper

Rinse the okra and then dry well with a paper towel. Cut off the tops and then cut the remaining pod into 1/2" slices, crosswise. In a bowl, toss together the okra and oil. Pour onto a Silpat or parchment lined baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast at 425 degrees until browned and crisp on the outside. Start checking them at about 10 minutes and stir often until well browned. Serve immediately.