

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
 - Cook Time: 15-20 minutes (total, depending on batch size)
 - Total Time: 35 minutes
 - Cuisine: Southern / American
 - Course: Side Dish / Appetizer
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Table of Contents



- [Ingredients](#)
 - [The Okra](#)
 - [The Breading](#)
 - [For Frying](#)
- [Equipment](#)
- [Instructions: The Time & Intensity Method](#)
 - [Phase 1: Preparation \(Low Intensity\)](#)
 - [Phase 2: The Dredge \(Medium Intensity\)](#)
 - [Phase 3: The Fry \(High Intensity\)](#)
 - [Phase 4: The Drain \(Low Intensity\)](#)
- [Serving Suggestions](#)
- [Nutrition Facts](#)

Ingredients

The Okra

- 1 lb (450g) fresh okra (Choose small to medium pods; large pods tend to be woody and tough).
- 1 cup buttermilk (If you don't have buttermilk, mix 1 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar into 1 cup whole milk and let sit for 5 minutes).
- 1 large egg (Optional, but helps the batter adhere better).

The Breading

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal (Medium grind is best. Do not use coarse polenta).
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp kosher salt (plus more for finishing)
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper (Optional, for a kick).

- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika (Optional, for depth).

For Frying

- 4 cups peanut oil, canola oil, or vegetable oil (Peanut oil is traditional and provides the best flavor, but canola is a great neutral alternative).
 - Flaky sea salt (for finishing).
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Equipment

- Large heavy-bottomed skillet or Dutch oven (Cast iron is ideal).
- Deep-fry thermometer (or a wooden spoon).
- Spider strainer or slotted spoon.
- Wire cooling rack set inside a baking sheet.
- Paper towels.

Instructions: The Time & Intensity Method

To master fried okra, you must understand the Intensity of the Oil and the Timing of the Dredge. Here is the step-by-step breakdown.

Phase 1: Preparation (Low Intensity)

Time: 10 Minutes

1. Wash and Dry: Rinse the okra pods under cold water. It is crucial to dry them thoroughly with a kitchen towel. If the okra is wet, the batter will slide off, and the oil will splatter violently.
2. Slice: Cut off the stem end and the very tip of the pod. Slice the pods into 1/2-inch rounds. You can discard the very tip.
3. Set up Station: In a medium bowl, whisk together the buttermilk and egg (if using). In a separate large bowl or shallow dish, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, salt, pepper, garlic powder, cayenne, and paprika.
4. Preheat Oil: Pour the oil into your skillet to a depth of about 1 1/2 inches. Begin heating over Medium-High heat. You are aiming for a temperature of 350°F (175°C) . *Intensity Check: If you don't have a thermometer, drop a pinch of the cornmeal mixture into the oil. If it sizzles immediately and rises to the top without burning, you are ready.*

Phase 2: The Dredge (Medium Intensity)

Time: 5 Minutes

1. **Wet Dredge:** Working in batches (never all at once), add a handful of okra slices to the buttermilk mixture. Stir to coat.
2. **Dry Dredge:** Using a fork or your fingers, transfer the wet okra to the cornmeal mixture. Toss well to ensure every slice is coated. Pro Tip: Let the coated okra sit for 5 minutes before frying. This allows the coating to hydrate and stick to the okra, preventing it from falling off in the oil.
3. **Shake Off Excess:** Before frying, lift the okra from the cornmeal and gently shake off the excess. Too much loose cornmeal will burn in the oil and make it gritty.

Phase 3: The Fry (High Intensity)

Time: 3-4 Minutes per Batch

1. **The Drop:** Carefully place a handful of the coated okra into the hot oil. Do not overcrowd the pan. If the temperature drops too low, the okra will absorb oil and become greasy rather than crispy.
2. **The Sizzle:** The oil should bubble aggressively around the okra. Maintain a temperature between 340°F and 360°F. If the oil starts smoking, reduce the heat immediately.
3. **The Flip:** Fry for about 2 minutes on the first side until golden brown, then use your spider strainer to flip the pieces. Fry for another 1-2 minutes.

4. The Test: The okra is done when it is a deep golden brown and floats near the surface.
Intensity Check: Listen to the sound. A steady, aggressive sizzle means moisture is leaving the okra (good). A faint sizzle means the oil is too cold.

Phase 4: The Drain (Low Intensity)

Time: 2 Minutes

1. Remove: Use the spider strainer to scoop the okra out of the oil, allowing excess oil to drip back into the pan.
2. Drain: Transfer the okra to the wire rack (preferred) or a paper towel-lined plate. Do not pile them high; a single layer keeps them crispy.
3. Season Immediately: Sprinkle with flaky sea salt while they are still glistening with oil. The salt will stick to the crust.
4. Hold Warm: Place the baking sheet in a 200°F oven to keep warm while you fry the remaining batches.

Serving Suggestions

Fried okra is best served immediately. As it cools, it loses its crunch.

- Classic Pairing: Serve with a side of Ranch dressing, Comeback Sauce, or spicy

Remoulade.

- The Meal: Pair with pulled pork sandwiches, fried catfish, or a simple tomato salad.
- Leftovers: If you have leftovers (unlikely!), do not microwave them. Reheat in an air fryer at 375°F for 3–4 minutes or in a toaster oven to restore crispness.

Nutrition Facts

Note: Nutritional information is an estimate and will vary based on the specific ingredients used and the amount of oil absorbed during frying.

Serving Size: 1 cup (approx. 1/6th of recipe)

Calories: 290

Total Fat: 16g

Saturated Fat: 2.5g

Trans Fat: 0g

Cholesterol: 35mg

Sodium: 420mg

Total Carbohydrate: 31g

Dietary Fiber: 4g

Total Sugars: 2g

Protein: 5g

Vitamin A: 10% DV

Vitamin C: 25% DV

Calcium: 8% DV

Iron: 10% DV