

Prep time 15 minutes
Rest time 10 minutes
Cook time 12-15 minutes (in batches)
Total time ~40 minutes
Yield 4-6 servings
Skill level Easy
Equipment Dutch oven or heavy skillet, deep-fry thermometer, wire rack, sheet pan

Table of Contents



- [Ingredients](#)
- [Method](#)
 - [Step 1 — Prepare the okra \(5 minutes\)](#)
 - [Step 2 — Make the wet dredge \(2 minutes\)](#)
 - [Step 3 — Build the dry coating \(3 minutes\)](#)
 - [Step 4 — Dredge in stages \(8 minutes\)](#)
 - [Step 5 — Rest the coating \(10 minutes\)](#)
 - [Step 6 — Heat the oil \(5-8 minutes\)](#)
 - [Step 7 — Fry in batches \(12-15 minutes total\)](#)
 - [Step 8 — Season and serve](#)
- [Intensity Guide](#)
- [Tips for Perfect Results](#)
- [Nutrition \(per serving, based on 6 servings\)](#)

Ingredients

For the okra:

- 1½ lbs (680 g) fresh okra, stems trimmed, cut into ½-inch rounds
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp hot sauce (optional, for tang)
- 1½ cups yellow cornmeal (medium grind)
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp kosher salt, plus more for finishing
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp smoked paprika (optional)
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional, for heat)
- 6–8 cups peanut or vegetable oil, for frying

For serving:

- Flaky sea salt
 - Lemon wedges
 - Remoulade, ranch, or comeback sauce
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Method

Step 1 — Prepare the okra (5 minutes)

Rinse the okra and pat it completely dry with paper towels — moisture is the enemy of crispy frying. Trim the stem ends and slice into ½-inch rounds. If any pods are large and woody, halve them lengthwise instead. Set aside.

Step 2 — Make the wet dredge (2 minutes)

In a medium bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, egg, and hot sauce until smooth. Let the mixture sit for a minute so the egg fully incorporates.

Step 3 — Build the dry coating (3 minutes)

In a wide, shallow dish (a pie plate works well), whisk together the cornmeal, flour, kosher salt, black pepper, garlic powder, smoked paprika, and cayenne until evenly combined. Break up any lumps with your fingers.

Step 4 — Dredge in stages (8 minutes)

Working in handfuls, add the okra rounds to the buttermilk mixture and toss to coat. Lift them out with a slotted spoon, letting excess liquid drip back into the bowl, then transfer to the cornmeal mixture. Toss and press gently so every piece is fully coated. Important: dredge only what you plan to fry in the next batch — wet coating sitting too long turns gummy.

Step 5 — Rest the coating (10 minutes)

Spread the coated okra on a wire rack set over a sheet pan and let it rest for 10 minutes. This brief rest hydrates the cornmeal slightly so it adheres and fries up crisper. Meanwhile, heat the oil.

Step 6 — Heat the oil (5-8 minutes)

Pour 1½ inches of oil into a Dutch oven or heavy skillet and heat over medium-high heat to 350°F (175°C). Use a deep-fry thermometer and adjust the burner as needed — too hot and the coating scorches before the okra softens; too cool and the coating turns greasy.

Step 7 — Fry in batches (12-15 minutes total)

Carefully lower a handful of okra into the oil, one piece at a time, and fry for 2-3 minutes per batch, stirring gently once or twice with a spider or slotted spoon so pieces brown evenly. Fry no more than a single layer at a time — overcrowding drops the oil temperature and steams the okra. Remove when deep golden brown and floating, and drain on a wire rack (not paper towels, which trap steam).

Step 8 — Season and serve

Sprinkle immediately with flaky salt while still hot. Serve right away with lemon wedges and your dipping sauce of choice. Best eaten within 20 minutes — fried okra waits for no one.

Intensity Guide

Stage	Heat / Intensity	Notes
Dredging	Low	Hands-on but relaxed; work in batches
Oil heating	Medium-high	Target 350°F; watch the thermometer
Frying	High attention	2–3 minutes per batch; oil temp swings fast
Seasoning & serving	Low	Keep finished batches warm in a 200°F oven if needed

Overall effort: Moderate — mostly hands-on, with one critical variable (oil temperature) to manage.

Tips for Perfect Results

- Dry okra = crispy okra. Pat pods dry before slicing, and don't rinse after cutting.
- No buttermilk? Stir 1 tbsp lemon juice into 1 cup whole milk and rest 5 minutes.
- Skip the soak for extra crunch: Some cooks dredge dry okra straight into the cornmeal — try both and pick your favorite.
- Watch the oil. Between batches, let the temperature climb back to 350°F before adding more okra.

- Frozen okra works — thaw completely and pat very dry, but fresh is superior for texture.

Nutrition (per serving, based on 6 servings)

Values are estimates and vary with portion size, oil absorption, and ingredient brands.

	Nutrient	Amount
Calories		~310 kcal
Total fat		~19 g
Saturated fat		~3 g
Cholesterol		~40 mg
Sodium		~480 mg
Total carbohydrates		~28 g
Dietary fiber		~3 g
Sugars		~2 g
Protein		~7 g