Prep Time	15 minutes
Cook Time	30 minutes
Total Time	45 minutes
Recipe Intensity / Skill Level	Easy (Beginner-Friendly)
Active Effort Level	Moderate (sautéing and periodic stirring)
Heat Intensity	Mild (adjustable via cayenne or hot sauce)
Yield	6 servings

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Ingredients

- 4 slices thick-cut bacon, chopped into $1/2$-inch pieces *(or 2 tbsp olive oil for vegetarian)*
- 1 lb (450g) fresh okra, rinsed, dried thoroughly, and sliced into $1/2$-inch rounds
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced

- 1 can (28 oz) whole peeled plum tomatoes with juices, coarsely crushed by hand
- 1/2 tsp granulated sugar *(optional, to balance tomato acidity)*
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper *(adjust to taste)*
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp freshly cracked black pepper
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth or vegetable stock
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

Step-by-Step Cooking Instructions

1.Render the Bacon:Heat Intensity: Medium (350°F / 175°C).

Place a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven or large cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped bacon pieces and cook for 6–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the fat has rendered completely and the bacon turns crispy.

Use a slotted spoon to transfer the crisp bacon to a paper-towel-lined plate, leaving roughly 2 tablespoons of liquid bacon grease in the skillet.

2.Sauté the Okra:Heat Intensity: Medium-High (375°F / 190°C).

Increase the heat slightly to medium-high. Add the sliced okra rounds to the hot bacon fat in a single layer. Sauté for 8–10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Culinary Note: High initial heat combined with the natural acidity of the tomatoes added later helps neutralize the mucilage (slime), ensuring a clean, tender bite. Once the okra has browned slightly at the edges, remove it from the skillet and set it aside with the bacon.

3.Sweat the Aromatics:Heat Intensity: Medium (350°F / 175°C).

Reduce heat back to medium. Add the diced yellow onion and green bell pepper to the remaining fat in the skillet. Cook for 5 minutes until the vegetables soften and the onion turns translucent.

Add the minced garlic, smoked paprika, cayenne pepper, salt, and black pepper. Stir constantly for 60 seconds until fragrant.

4.Deglaze and Simmer the Base:Heat Intensity: Medium-High to Low (Simmer).

Pour in the chicken or vegetable stock and apple cider vinegar, scraping up any browned bits (fond) stuck to the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon.

Add the hand-crushed tomatoes along with all their juices. Stir in the sugar if using. Bring the tomato base to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, then lower the burner heat to medium-low to maintain a low, steady simmer. Allow the sauce to reduce uncovered for 8 minutes.

5.Combine and Stew:Heat Intensity: Low Simmer (210°F / 98°C).

Return the sautéed okra and half of the reserved crispy bacon back into the pan with the simmering tomato mixture. Stir well to combine all ingredients.

Cover the pan partially with a lid and stew on low heat for 10–12 minutes, or until the okra is completely tender and the stew has thickened to your desired consistency. Taste and adjust salt or pepper as needed.

6.Garnish and Serve:Heat Intensity: Off.

Remove the skillet from the heat. Top with the remaining crispy bacon bits. Serve warm alongside fresh buttermilk cornbread or over a bed of steamed white rice.

Recipe Storage & Shelf Life

Proper storage preserves both the structural integrity of the okra and the acidity of the tomato stew base.

- Refrigeration: Store cooled leftovers in an airtight glass container for up to 4 days.
- Freezing: Allow the stew to cool completely to room temperature. Transfer to freezer-safe bags or containers, leaving $1/2$ inch of headspace. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating.
- Reheating Instructions: Reheat gently in a saucepan over medium-low heat on the stove until warmed through. Alternatively, microwave on medium power in 60-second intervals, stirring in between.

Nutritional Information

Nutritional values are calculated per serving based on 6 equal portions.

Nutrient	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value*
Calories	145 kcal	—
Total Fat	7 g	9%
Saturated Fat	2.5 g	13%
Trans Fat	0 g	—

Nutrient	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value*
Cholesterol	15 mg	5%
Sodium	520 mg	23%
Total Carbohydrates	15 g	5%
Dietary Fiber	4 g	14%
Sugars	7 g	—
Protein	6 g	12%
Vitamin C	28 mg	31%
Calcium	82 mg	6%
Iron	1.8 mg	10%
Potassium	460 mg	10%