



Bamya (okra) by Halima

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs okra (bamya)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, minced
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 tsp salt, or more to taste
- 1 tsp smoked paprika (or substitute regular paprika)
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1/4 tsp cayenne, or to taste

TIP

Serve okra hot. We usually eat it alone, but if we need a more substantial meal I serve it over rice, quinoa or couscous.



METHOD

1. Prepare your okra by rinsing it clean, then slicing off the top and bottom tips of each piece. At this point the okra will feel slimy. Don't worry, it will lose that texture as it cooks. To speed the process of prepping the okra, I sometimes line up the stem ends against my chef's knife. Then slice those stem ends off 4-5 pieces at once. Turn the okra pieces, realign the bottom tips with the knife, then slice off the very bottom tips. By grouping them this way you can speed through the whole batch and prep them relatively fast.
2. Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a sauté pan over medium. Add the minced onion and sauté, stirring frequently, for about 10 minutes until softened and starting to caramelize. To save time, I usually prep the okra (as outlined above) while the onion is cooking. Just be sure to keep a close eye on the onions and do not let them burn.
3. When the onions are cooked, add the minced garlic to the pan and sauté for another minute till fragrant. Add the okra to the pan and stir. It will feel like a lot of okra at first and the pan will be crowded, but it will quickly shrink up and soften as it cooks.
4. Whisk together 1 1/2 cups hot water, tomato paste, salt, paprika, red pepper flakes, and cayenne. Both the red pepper flakes and cayenne add heat; if you are super spice sensitive, omit the pepper flakes and start with a pinch of cayenne, then add more to taste as desired.
5. Pour the tomato liquid evenly over the top of the okra. Bring to a boil.
6. Cover the saute pan with a lid, vented at the edge. Reduce heat to a simmer. Let the okra cook for about 20-30 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so, until the largest pieces of okra have softened to your liking. We like the okra quite tender and almost falling apart, but that is a matter of preference. At the end of cooking, your tomato sauce should have reduced and thickened. If there is a lot of liquid in the pan, remove the lid and turn up the heat to a high simmer till the sauce has reduced (careful, do not let it burn!). Add more salt or spice to taste, if desired.

