



▶ STORING HERBS & SPICES
– COOKING WITH HERBS



▶ BUYING, STORING, PREPARATION,
& NUTRITION OF TOMATOES & OKRA



▶ BUYING, STORING, PREPARATION, &
NUTRITION OF POTATOES & PEACHES

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Enjoy Your Summer Produce From Garden, Farmers Market, or U-Pick

Summer is a time to enjoy fresh produce from the garden. If you don't have your own garden, find a local Farmers' Market or U-Pick farm nearby. At locally grown farmers' markets, produce is picked the day before it is brought to the market so you are getting a really fresh product.

It also allows you to be able to talk with the vendors and learn tips and recipes to use for what they are selling. If you visit the farmers' market a lot, then you can develop a relationship with that grower.

Our locally grown farmers market is only allowed to sell produce grown on their farm within a 75 mile radius of Texarkana, so you know you are getting fresh, local produce.

U-Pick farms are farms where you are allowed to pick produce for yourself for a fee. You literally harvest what you will eat. These are usually small farms where you can pick and take home produce. Find a list of U-Pick farms at <http://arkansasgrown.org/> or http://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/economics-marketing/docs/Arkansas_Grown.pdf.

Now is the time for fresh herbs, tomatoes, okra, potatoes, peaches, and much more to be available to purchase from farmers' markets and U-Pick farms.

HERBS

STORING HERBS AND SPICES

- Whole dried herbs and spices last much longer than crushed or ground forms. For greater freshness, buy the whole form and crush or grind when ready to use.
- The flavor of dried herbs and spices weakens over time. Check ground or crushed herbs and spices for freshness at least once a year. Crush a little bit in your hand and sniff. If the aroma is weak, throw away. Buying the smaller size instead of the economy size will save money in

the long run if the larger package is not used while still fresh.

- Store dried seasonings in a cool, dark, dry place. Heat, sunlight and dampness cause herbs and spices to lose their flavor and aroma quickly. Jars and bottles with tight-fitting lids are the best containers for storing. Keeping seasonings in the freezer will increase their shelf life.
- To dry fresh herbs: hang in bunches or lay on screens in a warm, dark area (not over 90 degrees) or a warm oven (less than 110 degrees). When herbs are brittle when rubbed between the hands, crumble into powder and store.
- To freeze fresh herbs: rinse carefully and dry between paper towels. Place in freezer bag or container with tight-fitting lid and freeze. These will not be suitable for garnish because the frozen herbs become limp as it thaws.

Seasoning	Storage Life
Whole	2 to 3 years
Ground	6 months – 2 years
Leafy herbs	3 months – 2 years
Dehydrated vegetables	6 months

COOKING WITH HERBS

- The art of using herbs & spices is in learning how to add and how to mix flavors. It is best to start with a tested recipe. Then add more or less seasoning to suit your taste.
- Many cooks prefer fresh herbs, if available. The flavor of fresh herbs is not as strong as dried.

Use two to three times as much fresh as dried herbs. As a general rule, ¼ teaspoon powdered = ¾ to 1 teaspoon crumbled = 2 to 3 teaspoons fresh.

- When creating your own recipes, use about ¼ teaspoon dried herbs or spices for each serving. Use less when using stronger seasonings. It is easier to add more than to try to make up for adding too much.
- The flavor of herbs and spices becomes weaker if cooked for a long time. When a recipe will be cooked for an hour or more, add seasonings about 45 minutes before it is done cooking.
- When using crushed or ground herbs and spices, add them 15 minutes before cooking is complete.

TOMATOES

BUYING AND STORING

- Arkansas tomatoes are available from May to October.
- Choose tomatoes that are firm and plump. Avoid those that are very soft, bruised, cracked or otherwise damaged.
- Ripe tomatoes are completely red or reddish-orange (depending on the variety) and give slightly to gentle palm pressure.
- Mature-green tomatoes have quality similar to vine-ripened, if given proper conditions to ripen.
- Select unpackaged tomatoes or those packaged in perforated wraps. This allows for good air circulation, which is needed to ripen tomatoes.
- One pound has 3 medium or 4 small tomatoes that yield about 1 ½ cups of pulp.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Fresh tomatoes can be served uncooked in salads or stewed, baked, broiled or microwaved.
- When peeling ripe tomatoes, drop in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds, then dip into cold water. The skins will slide off.
- When freezing tomatoes, the skins should be removed because they become tough.
- When canning, only use firm, ripe tomatoes. Overripe, soft tomatoes or tomatoes picked from frost- or disease-killed plants have less acid and may be unsafe to can.

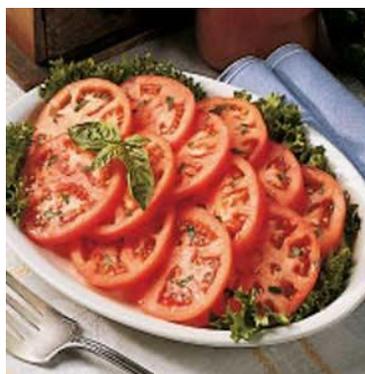
NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

One medium (2-inch diameter) tomato has only 24 calories, 0.3g fat, 5.3g carbohydrate, 1.1g protein, 254mg

potassium, 10mg sodium, 1g fiber (with skin). Tomatoes are high in potassium, vitamin C (37% RDI) and other antioxidants and low in sodium, fat and calories.

MARINATED TOMATOES RECIPE

- 6 large red ripe tomatoes, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced fine
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme (or 2 tablespoon fresh)
- ¼ cup green onion, sliced thin
- ¼ teaspoon parsley, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup vinegar
- ½ cup canola or olive oil



Place tomatoes in a shallow dish or zip top baggie. In a separate bowl, combine green onion, thyme, garlic, parsley, salt and pepper. Sprinkle mixture over tomatoes. Combine oil and vinegar in mason jar with lid secured; blend well. Pour over tomatoes; cover and

refrigerate at least 2 hours. Spoon marinade over tomatoes frequently.

OKRA

BUYING AND STORING

- Choose pods that are crisp-looking yet tender and 2 to 4 inches long. Long pods tend to be tough.
- Avoid pods that are limp and old or streaked with brown.
- Allow ¼ pound per serving.
- Fresh okra is very perishable. Keep no more than 2 to 3 days in the refrigerator.
- Store in a paper bag or wrapped in a paper towel and placed inside a perforated plastic bag to keep pods very dry. Moisture turns pods slimy.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Okra can be boiled, baked or fried. It combines well with other vegetables, especially tomatoes, and is a natural thickening agent.

- Rapid cooking will preserve flavor and prevent pastiness.
- Okra should not be cooked in copper, iron or brass cookware. The reaction between okra and these metals causes the pods to discolor.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

One-half cup okra has 30 calories, 5.8g carbohydrate, 4mg sodium, 257mg potassium, 1.5g protein, 0.1g fat. Okra is high in vitamin C (26% RDI), folate (9% RDI) and other B vitamins, magnesium, potassium and calcium and is low in fat, calories and sodium.



BAKED OKRA & TOMATO RECIPE

½ pound fresh okra, cut into ½-inch slices

1 large tomato, chopped

Olive oil

Kosher salt and black pepper to taste

1 teaspoon minced garlic (or garlic powder to taste)

½ cup panko bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 425°F. Place the okra, tomatoes and garlic in a bowl. Pour in the olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Stir until the vegetables are coated with oil. Add panko bread crumbs and stir. Spread the vegetables out on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake for 13 to 15 minutes until the tomatoes are soft and the okra is lightly browned.

POTATOES

BUYING AND STORING

- Purchase potatoes that are firm, well-shaped and smooth with few eyes. Reject potatoes with large cuts, cracks, bruises, decay, sprouting eyes or shriveling.
- Avoid green potatoes because they contain solanine, a substance which causes a bitter flavor and even illness if enough is eaten.
- A pound of potatoes has 3 to 4 medium potatoes and yields 3 cups peeled and sliced, 2 ½ cups peeled and diced, 2 cups mashed or 2 cups of French fries.
- Store potatoes in a well-ventilated, cool, dark area. Potatoes last 2 weeks at 60°F and high humidity, but can be stored for 4 months at 40°F.
- Avoid storing potatoes in the refrigerator. The cool temperature favors the accumulation of sugar, giving the potato a sweet flavor and dark color when cooked.
- Avoid storing potatoes in the light because they will turn green.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Potatoes cooked in iron cookware will turn a blue-gray color.
- Peeled potatoes turn dark quickly if not cooked immediately. To avoid this, toss with a little lemon juice. Prolonged soaking in cold water is not recommended because it can result in the loss of water-soluble vitamins.
- In general, you should not freeze potatoes because they become mushy. When freezing combination meals, omit potatoes until just before serving.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

1 potato, plain, baked with skin has 129 calories, 0.2g fat, 4.5g protein, 37g carbohydrate, 2mg iron, low (24mg) sodium, very high (952mg) potassium, 4g fiber. Potatoes are an important source of fiber and many nutrients, including vitamin C (14mg), an antioxidant that may reduce your risk of heart disease and certain cancers; and potassium, a mineral that helps maintain healthy blood pressure.

ROASTED PARMESAN POTATO WEDGES

4 potatoes (about 2 pounds)

2 teaspoons oil (canola, vegetable, olive, etc.)

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 teaspoon seasoned salt

¼ teaspoon onion powder

¼ teaspoon garlic powder

¼ teaspoon pepper



Cut each potato lengthwise in half. Cut each half into three wedges. In a large bowl, sprinkle potatoes with oil; toss to coat. Combine the remaining ingredients. Add to potatoes; toss to coat.

Arrange potatoes in a single layer on a 15-inch x 10-inch x 1-inch baking dish coated with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle with any remaining coating. Bake at 350°F for 45-55 minutes or until golden brown and tender. Yield: 6 servings.

PEACHES

BUYING AND STORING

- Arkansas peaches are available from early June through August.
- Peaches are classified as clingstone or freestone. The fruit is easily separated from the stone or pit in freestone varieties. In cling-stones, the flesh adheres tightly to the pit.

- Select peaches that are slightly soft to firm and free from bruises. Avoid green-colored peaches because they are unripe and will not become sweeter as the color changes.
- Ripe peaches have a creamy or golden undertone. The amount of rosy “blush” on the surface is a characteristic of the variety, not ripeness. Fragrance is also an indicator of ripeness.
- Approximately 3 to 4 peaches equals 1 pound. One pound yields 2 cups sliced peaches or 1 ½ cups of pulp or puree.
- The amount of time required to ripen peaches will vary depending on the firmness of peaches, but expect about 2 to 4 days.
- Ripe peaches can be stored for 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator at 40°F.

PREPARATION TIPS

- To peel peaches, dip in boiling water for 20 to 30 seconds. Immediately dip in cold water and skin will slide right off. Riper fruit needs less scalding time to loosen peels.
- Peaches brown rapidly when exposed to air. To prevent this, dip halves or slices in 1 quart of water with 3 tablespoons lemon juice or three crushed 500 milligrams vitamin C tablets or use a commercial ascorbic acid mixture such as Fruit Fresh®.
- Peaches are delicious in recipes or eaten right out of your hand. Slice over cereal, ice cream or plain cake.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

1 medium (2 ½ inch diameter) peach has 58 calories, 0g fat, 14g carbohydrate, 285mg potassium, 1g protein, 0mg sodium, 2g fiber (with skin). Peaches are low in calories, fat free and sodium free. They are a good source of vitamin A and vitamin C (16mg) and provide potassium and fiber to the diet.

FRESH PEACH POUND CAKE RECIPE

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups flour (divided)*



2 cups (approximately 1 pound) fresh peaches, pitted and chopped

*2 cups of sifted flour in batter, 1 cup to dredge peaches

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time. Add vanilla. Mix in baking powder, salt and 2 cups of flour. Fold in peaches that have been dredged in 1 cup flour. Pour into 10-inch tube pan which has been buttered and sprinkled with sugar. Bake at 325 degrees F for 60 to 70 minutes. Allow to cool in pan for 10-15 minutes before inverting onto wire rack to serve completely. This cake is great served alone or can be served with a dollop of whipping cream. Serves 10-12.

NOTE: Use butter in this cake instead of margarine.

VEGETABLE MEDLEY

- 1 tablespoon low-fat margarine
- 2 medium yellow summer squash, sliced
- 1 medium zucchini, sliced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 medium fresh tomatoes, diced
- ½ cup fresh or frozen corn
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried basil (or 1 to 1 ½ teaspoon fresh, chopped)
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper



In a large pan over medium heat, melt margarine. Add squash, zucchini and onion. Sauté 3 to 4 minutes. Add tomatoes, corn, garlic, and seasonings; cook another 2 to 3 minutes until vegetables are tender. Serve immediately.

If you have any questions about fresh summer produce, please feel free to call me at 870-779-3609, email Chaley@uaex.edu, or visit Room 215 in the Miller County Courthouse, 400 Laurel, Texarkana, AR.

Sincerely,


Carla Hadley,
 County Extension Agent
 Staff Chair

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