



# Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

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## Summer '08

WEEK 7 of 13

Harvest list is [Online](#)

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**More recipes on our website**

### Mesquite Harvest is ON!



If you haven't started harvesting mesquite pods, now's a good time—they're all over the place! You can pick them right from the tree (they're cleaner that way). First taste pods for sweetness—not all trees yield the same flavor. Ripe pods should come loose easily. If you gather pods from the ground, avoid those with any sign of black mold and rinse thoroughly before drying and storing. Dry pods in the sun for 2-3 days so that they snap easily when bent. Store pods in buckets or bags in a dry place and keep them out of rodents' reach. Come November, you'll be ready to mill your pods into flour just in time for Desert Harvesters' annual milling events. For more information about harvesting, preparing, milling, and cooking with mesquite, visit the Desert Harvesters at: [www.desertharvesters.org/harvesting-processing/](http://www.desertharvesters.org/harvesting-processing/).

### Newsletter editors

Kimi Eisele & Philippe Waterinckx

### CSA CREW HIGHLIGHT: CHRIS



We're continuing our CSA crew bios series, which we started last session. Here's a profile about Chris, our Friday runner (pictured left with Amy and Felice):

*I am a native Tucsonense and a proud graduate of the U of A. After 15 years working as a lifeguard, I grew a conscience and am now a social worker. I am also an ordained minister (ask me about your upcoming nuptials). My pro-wrestling name is*

*Zipperhead. I have two sweet basset hounds who are acting as foster siblings to a homeless basset. You might see me about town riding my green Spot, or another of my bicycles. Tending to remain behind the scenes, I am passionate about helping children, cycling, and caring for my dogs. I also get great enjoyment from playing the violin and bass. One glance should tell you that I like food, and that appreciation led me to stints cooking at Angela's, Caruso's and Café Sweetwater over the years. A wise co-worker introduced me to the CSA, and I have been a member and volunteer since September (I have lost 45 pounds in the process). Getting used to some of the produce that I normally wouldn't eat was initially a challenge, but now I feel great about trying so many new items (and finding ways to eat beets for two months straight). I wish I had joined sooner.*

### OKRA



Okra, along with watermelon, came to the New World in association with the slave trade. The word "okra" derives from a Ghanaian language. During the summer it is prepared fresh, often stir-fried, stewed with tomatoes, dipped in batter and fried like a fritter, or added to gumbos. For winter use the young pods can be pickled or sliced and dried like fruit. The seeds can be roasted and ground to make coffee.

Besides green okra, Farmer Frank also grows a red heirloom variety known as Texas Hill Country Red. It is drought-tolerant and an excellent pickling variety, but it can also be sliced and eaten raw in salads.

Many people dislike okra for its gumminess, but cooked over high heat with enough room for it to brown instead of stew, okra loses the juices that cause the gummy texture. For crisp okra, fry, stir-fry or grill it; for soft, moist okra, stew it. Another trick for reducing okra's gumminess is to let it completely dry after washing before cutting it.

Okra's characteristic mucilaginous trait comes from acetylated acidic polysaccharide and galaturonic acid contained within. When cut, it releases these chemical compounds and makes an ideal, naturally thickened stew of vegetables and legumes. Okra can be dried, ground into a powder, and used as a thickening agent for soups and sauces.

### ROASTED CORN FOR NEXT WEEK

Farmer Frank, Tanya and Julie from Crooked Sky Farms will be at the CSA next week on Tuesday and Friday and they will roast corn for everyone! CSA members are welcome to bring their families to partake in the fun.

### Okra Tips

**STORING:** Store fresh okra in the refrigerator and use within a day or two. Beyond that they begin to lose their freshness, flavor, and nutrients.

**PREPARING:** Wash the okra in cold water and dry thoroughly. If you plan to cook them whole, no further preparation is necessary. Keeping the okra whole prevents the mucilage from oozing out. If you plan to use them sliced, slice off the stem end, and cut the okra crosswise into short segments.

**RAW:** Thinly slice crosswise and add to a bowl of salad greens with your favorite dressing. Or combine with your favorite chopped vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet onions, avocado, cashews and cucumbers.

Thinly slice okra and marinate for two or three days in a dressing of olive oil, apple cider vinegar, fresh lime juice, finely diced red or green chiles, and seasonings. Use as a condiment.

**SAUTEING:** Slice washed okra and saute until tender in oil along with onions, garlic, and ginger. Season to taste.

**BRAISING:** Okra can be combined in a stew or "gumbo" along with your favorite vegetables, legumes or grains, onions, and tomatoes. Season with spices and cook covered on top of the stove until the legumes or grains are cooked through.

**SOUPMAKING:** Add okra to your favorite vegetable soup ingredients and enjoy its ability to thicken the soup naturally. Puree if desired or enjoy the soup with texture of bite-sized vegetables.

**GRILLING:** Make a dressing with oil, salt, pepper and spices. Gently mix it with whole okra until all pods are coated. Throw on a hot grill until browned, about 2-4 minutes per side.

### Curried Okra Stir-Fry

Heidi DeCosmo, Tucson CSA

2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 teaspoon minced ginger  
1 tablespoon finely chopped jalapeno  
2 tablespoons curry powder  
1 pound fresh okra, whole, trimmed leaving tops intact  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Heat oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook until golden, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, pepper, curry powder, and okra. Stir-fry about 5 minutes. Stir in the salt and pepper.

### Okra Poppers

JodyLee Estrada Duek, Tucson CSA

15 young okra, 4" or so  
6 ounces white cheese, such as feta, goat, cream, cotija, string, Oaxaca, queso menonniito, etc.  
Egg, egg white, or milk  
Corn meal or bread crumbs  
4 ounces cooking oil

Wash the okra and slit them open down one side. Insert 1/2 ounce cheese in each piece. Dip the okra in beaten egg, egg white, or milk, then roll in corn meal or bread crumbs (add pepper or paprika to the crumbs for more bite). Fry the okra in hot oil for about 2 minutes, turning once or twice to brown on all sides. Serves 2 as a dish, or 4 to 6 as an appetizer.

### Coo-Coo from Barbados

Amy Schwemm, Tucson CSA, adapted from Elisabeth Lambert Ortiz's *The Complete Book of Caribbean Cooking*

Basically polenta with as much sliced okra as you like. Good pan-fried the next day.

6 or more small, young okra  
3 cups water  
1 cup yellow cornmeal  
3 tablespoons butter (optional)  
salt to taste

Wash and dry okra, cut off the stems, and slice into 1/4-inch slices. Bring water to a boil, add salt and okra, and cook for 5 minutes. Whisk in cornmeal in a slow stream. Cook, stirring to prevent sticking, until thick and smooth, about 5 minutes. Serve hot with butter.

### Fried Okra

JodyLee Estrada Duek, Tucson CSA

15 baby okra, 4-5"  
1 egg  
Cornmeal  
2 ounces oil

Dip okra in beaten egg and roll in cornmeal. Fry 1-2 minutes in hot oil, turning once or twice. The okra should be al dente and just cooked, with the seeds feeling like young corn kernels in your mouth. Serves 2.