

Crispy Fried Okra with Spicy Aioli: A Southern Favorite

There's something inherently delightful about a perfectly executed fried vegetable, and



OVEN
350°F

TIME
5 min

METHOD
Air fryer

PRINT
Recipe Card

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound fresh okra, sliced into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rounds
- 1 cup buttermilk (or prepare your own: 1 cup milk + 1 tsp white vinegar, let sit 5 minutes)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cornmeal (fine or medium grind)
- ... cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- ... teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional, adjust for heat preference)
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- Vegetable oil, for frying (canola, peanut, or corn oil work well)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise (good quality, full-fat for best results)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (freshly squeezed for brightness)
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce (such as Sriracha, Tabasco, or your favorite go-to)
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced or grated
- Pinch of cayenne pepper or smoked paprika (optional, for extra flavor and color)
- Salt, to taste

Swaps and Notes:

Okra: Fresh okra is best for crispiness. If using frozen okra, ensure it is completely thawed and very well-drained and patted dry before soaking in buttermilk to avoid excess moisture.

Buttermilk: If you don't have buttermilk, you can

easily make a substitute: add 1 tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon juice to a measuring cup, then fill to the 1-cup line with regular milk. Let it sit for 5-10 minutes until it slightly curdles.

Cornmeal/Flour Blend: This combination gives the ideal crispy texture. You can adjust the ratio slightly if you prefer more cornmeal crunch.

Spices: Adjust cayenne pepper to your desired heat level for both the okra coating and the aioli.

Smoked paprika in the aioli adds a lovely depth of flavor.

Oil for Frying: Choose an oil with a high smoke point, like vegetable, canola, or peanut oil.

Aioli Base: While mayonnaise is the base, you can use Greek yogurt (plain, full-fat) for a healthier, tangier aioli, or a mix of both.

Directions:

Prepare Okra & Soak: Start by giving your fresh okra a good rinse under cold water. Then, thoroughly dry the okra with paper towels - this is important to prevent sliminess. Slice each okra pod into 1/2-inch thick rounds. Place the sliced okra in a bowl and pour the buttermilk over it, ensuring all the pieces are coated. Let them soak for about 10 minutes while you prepare the breading.

Make the Breading Mixture: In a shallow bowl (a pie plate or wide dish works well), combine the cornmeal, all-purpose flour, garlic powder, cayenne pepper (if using), salt, and black pepper. Whisk everything together thoroughly to ensure the spices are evenly distributed.

Heat Frying Oil: Time to get the oil ready! Pour 1-2 inches of vegetable oil into a deep skillet, cast-iron pan, or Dutch oven. Place it over medium-high heat and bring the oil to 350°F (175°C). Use a kitchen thermometer to accurately gauge the temperature for the best results.

Dredge and Fry Okra: Working in batches to avoid overcrowding the pan, take a handful of buttermilk-soaked okra pieces and transfer them to the cornmeal mixture. Toss them until each piece is fully coated. Gently shake off any excess breading. Carefully place the coated okra pieces into the hot oil. Fry for about 2-3 minutes per side, flipping once, until they are beautifully golden brown and delightfully crispy. Remove the cooked fritters with a slotted spoon and transfer them to a plate lined with paper towels to drain any excess oil. Immediately sprinkle the hot okra with a little extra salt to taste. Repeat with remaining okra.

Prepare the Spicy Aioli: While the okra cools slightly, make your dipping sauce. In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, fresh lemon juice, hot sauce, finely minced or grated garlic, and an optional pinch of cayenne pepper or smoked paprika. Whisk until smooth and well combined. Taste the

aioli and adjust the amount of hot sauce or salt to suit your preferred level of heat and seasoning.

Serve: Serve the crispy fried okra hot, alongside that zesty spicy aioli for dipping. Enjoy every crunchy, flavorful bite!

Tips for Success:

Dry Okra First: Before slicing and soaking, thoroughly dry the okra. This minimizes sliminess and helps the buttermilk and breading adhere better.

Proper Oil Temperature: Maintaining 350°F (175°C) is key for crispy, non-greasy okra. If the oil is too cool, the okra will absorb too much oil; if too hot, it will burn before cooking through.

Don't Overcrowd: Fry in small batches. Overcrowding lowers the oil temperature and leads to soggy, not crispy, okra.

Season Hot: Always season fried foods immediately after they come out of the oil. The salt will stick better and enhance the flavor.

Fresh Garlic for Aioli: Using freshly minced or grated garlic in the aioli makes a big difference in flavor compared to garlic powder.

Serving Suggestions and Pairings:

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Prepare : Okra & Soak:** Start by giving your fresh okra a good rinse under cold water. Then, thoroughly dry the okra with paper towels - this is important to prevent sliminess. Slice each okra pod into 1/8-inch thick rounds. Place the sliced okra in a bowl and pour the buttermilk over it, ensuring all the pieces are coated. Let them soak for about 10 minutes while you prepare the breading.
- 2. Make the : Breading Mixture:** In a shallow bowl (a pie plate or wide dish works well), combine the cornmeal, all-purpose flour, garlic powder, cayenne pepper (if using), salt, and black pepper. Whisk everything together thoroughly to ensure the spices are evenly distributed.
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7. Tips for Success: Dry Okra First: Before slicing and soaking, thoroughly dry the okra. This minimizes sliminess and helps the buttermilk and breading adhere better.
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10. Season : Hot: Always season fried foods immediately after they come out of the oil. The salt will stick better and enhance the flavor.
11. Fresh : Garlic for Aioli: Using freshly minced or grated garlic in the aioli makes a big difference in flavor compared to garlic powder.
12. Serving Suggestions and Pairings: This Fried Okra with Spicy Aioli is incredibly versatile. It makes an excellent appetizer or a unique side dish for barbecues, potlucks, or any meal that needs a burst of Southern charm. It pairs wonderfully with grilled meats, fried chicken, or even as a snack with a refreshing iced tea.
13. If you enjoy : Southern-inspired flavors, you'll definitely want to try these other dishes:
14. My This : Tomato Skillet with Okra and Sausage is My Favorite Quick Dinner Packed with Southern Flavor for a complete meal.
15. And for true comfort food, my : This Cajun Chicken Sausage Gumbo is My Favorite Bowl of Southern Comfort is unbeatable.
16. Storage and Leftover Tips: Fried okra is truly best enjoyed fresh and hot for maximum crispiness. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2-3 days. To reheat and regain some crispness, it's best to warm them in a single layer in a toaster oven or air fryer at 350°F (175°C) for a few minutes until heated through and crisp again. Microwaving is not recommended as it will make them soggy. The spicy aioli can be stored separately in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.
17. More Recipes You Will Love: If you appreciate the comforting and flavorful essence of Southern cooking, here are a few more recipes that I think you'll enjoy:
18. For a hearty, lazy : Sunday meal, check out These Easy Turkey Wings are My Favorite Comfort Food for Lazy Sundays.

19. And if you're looking for a simple yet impressive appetizer, my [This Baked Brie Appetizer Is My Favorite Effortless Way to Impress Guests](#) is always a hit.
20. For another fantastic party dip, my [This Beer Cheese Dip is My Favorite Party Starter That Disappears in Minutes](#) is always a crowd-pleaser.
21. Final Thoughts: These Fried Okra with Spicy Aioli are a testament to the fact that humble ingredients can be transformed into something truly spectacular with the right technique and a little love. They offer that delightful crunch, savory flavor, and a perfect kick from the aioli that will have everyone asking for more. Don't shy away from okra - embrace this delicious Southern tradition!
22. Have you tried fried okra before, or will this be your first time? What's your favorite dipping sauce for fried veggies? Share your thoughts in the comments below, and don't forget to follow Chef Maniac for more delicious recipes!

SWAPS & NOTES

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More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/crispy-fried-okra-with-spicy-aioli-a-southern-favorite/>