

Crispy Pepper Jack Stuffed Fried Okra: A Southern Treat

Crispy Pepper Jack Cheese Stuffed Fried Okra Pods



OVEN
350°F

TIME
5-10 min

METHOD
Air fryer

PRINT
Recipe Card

INGREDIENTS

20 large fresh okra pods
4 oz pepper jack cheese, sliced into thin strips (about 20 strips)
1 cup buttermilk (or milk mixed with 1 tsp white vinegar or lemon juice)
1 cup yellow cornmeal
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
Salt and black pepper, to taste
Vegetable oil, for frying (about 2-3 cups, depending on pan size)
Optional for serving: Ranch dressing, chipotle mayo, or spicy aioli, Fresh lime wedges

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the Okra: Start by rinsing your fresh okra pods under cold water and then thoroughly drying them with paper towels. Using a sharp knife, make a lengthwise slit down one side of each okra pod, going about two-thirds of the way through, but without cutting all the way through the pod. Carefully use your finger or a small spoon to remove a few of the internal seeds to create a small cavity for the cheese.
2. Stuff with Cheese: Take a thin strip of pepper jack cheese and gently stuff it into the prepared slit in each okra pod. Press the okra pod closed around the cheese. If you find some pods aren't holding together well, you can use a toothpick inserted horizontally through the okra to secure the cheese inside, removing it after frying.
3. Soak in Buttermilk: Place the cheese-stuffed okra pods in a shallow dish or bowl. Pour the buttermilk (or your homemade buttermilk substitute) over them, ensuring they are well coated. Let them soak for at least 10 minutes while you prepare the breading. This helps the coating stick and adds flavor.
4. Make the Breading: In a separate shallow bowl, combine the cornmeal, all-purpose flour, garlic powder, smoked paprika, along with a generous pinch of salt and black pepper (about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon each, or to taste). Whisk everything together thoroughly until well combined.
5. Coat the Okra: Working with one or two pods at a time, lift each stuffed okra pod from the buttermilk, allowing any excess buttermilk to drip off for a few seconds. Immediately dredge the okra in the cornmeal

mixture, pressing lightly with your fingers to help the coating adhere evenly to all sides. Ensure each pod is fully coated. Place the coated okra on a clean plate or baking sheet while you prepare the others.

6. **6. Fry Until Golden:** Pour about 2 inches of vegetable oil into a deep pan, cast-iron skillet, or heavy-bottomed pot. Heat the oil over medium-high heat until it reaches 350°F (175°C). If you don't have a thermometer, a small piece of breading should sizzle vigorously when dropped in. Carefully place the coated okra pods into the hot oil in batches. Do not overcrowd the pan, as this will lower the oil temperature and result in soggy okra. Fry for about 2-3 minutes per side, or until they are golden brown and deliciously crispy all over.
7. **7. Drain and Serve:** Once fried to perfection, use a slotted spoon or tongs to carefully transfer the crispy okra to a paper towel-lined plate to drain any excess oil. Serve these delightful bites hot, alongside your favorite dipping sauce like ranch dressing, chipotle mayo, or a spicy aioli. A fresh squeeze of lime juice over the top adds a wonderful zesty finish that brightens the flavors!

SWAPS & NOTES

Okra Size: Larger, firmer okra pods work best for stuffing.

Cheese Choice: While pepper jack offers a fantastic spicy kick, you can use cheddar, Monterey jack, or even a spicy mozzarella if you prefer a different flavor or heat level.

Buttermilk Substitute: If you don't have buttermilk, you can easily make your own: add 1 teaspoon of white vinegar or lemon juice to a measuring cup, then fill the rest of the cup with regular milk (any fat percentage).

Let it sit for 5-10 minutes until it slightly curdles.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Dry Okra First: Ensure your fresh okra is completely dry after rinsing before you slit and stuff it.

Excess moisture can make the coating less crispy.

Don't Overstuff: Too much cheese can make it hard to seal the okra and might cause the cheese to leak out during frying.

Even Coating: Press the breading firmly onto the okra to ensure a good, even coating that gets extra crispy.

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/crispy-pepper-jack-stuffed-fried-okra-a-southern-treat/>