

SPICY OVEN ROASTED OKRA

Adapted from thedeliciouscrescent.com

1 lb okra	2 tsp red pepper flakes
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil	1/2 tsp cumin seeds
2 Tbsp coconut flakes, dry	1/2 tsp salt
3 cloves garlic, finely sliced	

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.
2. Rinse the okra and pat dry. Trim the tips and stem ends (only the very end).
Slice the okra pods lengthwise.
3. Transfer sliced okra to a large bowl. Add olive oil, coconut flakes, garlic, red pepper flakes, cumin, and salt, tossing to coat well. Place okra slices in a single layer on a parchment paper lined baking sheet.
4. Roast until edges are crisp and brown but tender in the center, about 15 minutes. Stir halfway through if needed.
5. Transfer to a platter and serve immediately.

GRILLED CHICKEN KABOBS

Adapted from carlsbadcravings.com

1 1/2 lbs chicken breast, 1 1/4" cubes	Marinade:
3 bell peppers, any color, 1 1/4" cubes	1/3 c olive oil
2 zucchini, 1/2" medallions	3 Tbsp lemon juice
1 large onion, 1 1/4" chunks	2 Tbsp soy sauce
	2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
	2 Tbsp brown sugar
	1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
	1 1/2 tsp each onion powder, garlic powder, salt
	1 tsp each dried basil, dried oregano, dried thyme, paprika
	1/2 tsp each pepper, red pepper flakes

1. Whisk marinade ingredients together in large bowl or bag. Remove 2 Tbsp to a small bowl for basting.
2. Remove 3 Tbsp to a separate large bowl or bag with the vegetables, toss to coat, and refrigerate. Add chicken to remaining marinade and stir to coat. Marinate 4-8 hours in the refrigerator.
3. Soak skewers: if using wooden skewers, soak them in water until ready to use. When ready to cook, thread chicken and veggies snugly onto skewers.
4. Heat grill to medium-high heat or 425 degrees F, and generously grease with vegetable oil. Once hot, add chicken kabobs and cover.
5. Grill 8-12 minutes, until chicken reaches 160 degrees F. Rotate halfway through cooking and baste with reserved marinade. Baste again after removing from grill; let rest 5 minutes before serving.



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Leafy Greens: Store leafy greens in the fridge in a perforated plastic bag. If you chop and wash ahead of time, spin the leaves dry before putting back in the bag with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. Refresh by plunging them in ice water 15-20 minutes.

Beans: Store unwashed beans in a perforated plastic bag in the veggie bin of your fridge for up to 1 week. Rejuvenate limp beans by soaking them in ice water for 30 minutes.

Carrots, Turnips, Beets, Radishes: Store in a bag, or other container in the coldest crisper bin of your fridge. If your root vegetables still have greens attached, cut them off. Keep the greens refrigerated in a closed plastic bag. The roots should last for weeks.

Zucchini: All summer squash and zucchini can be used interchangeably. Store unwashed in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable bin of your fridge. They should keep for more than a week.

Okra: Keep okra in a paper bag in the fridge. It will store for a week. A small bit of black streaking is normal. Wash and cut just before use.

What Goes Around, Comes Around

Our 4th of July cookout was great fun for us to showcase our fantastic foods with friends, family, and our community! Thanks to each of you that came out to partake and tour part of the farm. The precious rain that shortened the tour delivered about an inch of water to stem the tide of drought, a nice presentation of how tenuous farming is. When I gather my thoughts to prepare for a tour, I think about how best to showcase our regenerative farming systems and the interconnectedness of plants and animals. I hope this to be a main takeaway for attendees as it is central to decisions we make on a daily basis. Let me see if I can get it down in writing.

Deciding where to start a circle of life conversation can sometimes be challenging, but not in this instance. It starts with ruminant livestock, Angus-Wagyu cattle and Katahdin sheep, who graze perennial pasture plants on Elmwood Stock Farm. The animals are sorted into nutritional needs groups: nursing mothers need a higher plane of nutrition than non-lactating adult females. Weaned and young stock require good grass to grow and become healthy on their own. No matter the group size, when using temporary electric fencing small paddocks are laid out to account for several days of grazing. When a herd of cattle or flock of sheep move into a fresh paddock, they selectively graze various pasture plants, eating the most nutritious first, then on day two or three they eat the tougher parts of the plants, albeit sometimes reluctantly. This is good for the animals, and good for the plants. The livestock are consistently eating what they should, and the plants regrow to be nice and tender and fresh the next time the livestock rotate back around, as your lawn does with each mowing. The cows and ewes know the farm in this way, gifting us their offspring annually in the process. This quick grazing-and-moving system keeps internal and external parasite populations in check as well, which is actually the decider in how much pasture to give them in warm weather.

The thing is, when cattle or sheep remove the leaves from a plant, a proportionate amount of root mass dies because there is not enough food coming down from above ground, due to reduced photosynthetic activity. The microbes thriving in our organic soils compost the roots capturing organic matter. While it is self-fulfilling for them to do this, it is altruistic by any definition. What is good for the microbes helps the plants in due time—carbon sequestration as nature intended. Another offshoot to this system is the meat products produced deliver the types of heart-healthy fats our bodies are looking for based on the livestock's ingestion of fresh leaves and plants. This solar-powered food production system is set to run in perpetuity.

Most of the farm is managed in this way. The relative handful of acres that grow vegetables are the flatter fields, where soil can be cultivated without fear of erosion. After five years of cattle rotating through these fields, it is time for a vegetable crop to be grown since men and women should not live by meat alone. The winter prior to plowing up the sod, John unrolls hay bales as he feeds his cattle so all the cows can eat at once. As is their nature, when they fill their rumen, they lay down on the residual hay to ruminate. Hours later, they stand, stretch, and poop. By unrolling the hay in a different spot each day, he effectively fertilizes the entire field simply by how he fed the hay.

Between the five years of soil building, and this slug of imported nutrients in the form of hay and cattle manure, the microbes yield enough strength to provide plenty of nutrients for heavy feeding crops like tomato, potato, pepper, squash, etc. In the fall after the first year that veggies are harvested, a winter wheat cover crop will hold the soil (and feed the microbes) until being turned under the following spring for greens, broccoli, etc. Often a fall crop of similar varieties can be grown in the same field, completing the second year in vegetable production. The third year of cropping is most often peas and beans as they generate some of their own fertility through a symbiotic relationship with a rhizobia bacterium, before the field is planted back into pasture/hay forage plants for five more years.

With this system, tomatoes for example, are only grown in the same field every eight years. While they are growing, tomato insects and diseases migrate in over the course of the summer. The following spring, when the tomato insects and diseases awaken, they are distraught because they are expecting tomatoes to feed on come spring. They do, in fact, die since their favorite host plant is way far away, which breaks their life cycles, and keeps them in check.

Putting it all together, our regenerative rotational farming systems are good for the plants, good for the livestock, good for the soil, good for the vegetables, good for a healthy human diet, and by extension good for the planet and good for public health. While this solar powered food farm may be set to run in perpetuity, it's not on auto pilot. Our job is to efficiently capture as much solar energy as possible by deciding what or who goes where, and when. We plan and we plant what the microbes and livestock need. What goes around, comes around.

Your support and words of encouragement make it all possible. —Mac