

*A Word About Gumbos:*

Gumbo is an ORIGINAL creation and a cherished possession in South Louisiana kitchens. The word "gumbo" comes from the Congo "quin-gombo" which means okra. It may be made with okra or with filé as a thickening agent. Filé is the powdered sassafras leaf made long ago by the Choctaw Indians. Whereas okra is cooked with the gumbo, filé is added AFTER the gumbo is removed from the heat. Never add filé while gumbo is cooking because boiling after the filé is added tends to make the gumbo stringy and unfit for use.

Gumbo is a wonderful means of using leftovers: bits of ham or a ham-bone, turkey, duck or chicken carcass, sausage, seafoods or bacon. (When using a carcass or a hambone, boil the bones and use this stock in the gumbo.) Gumbo is subject to infinite variations; all these ingredients are interchangeable in the following recipes. The thickness of the gumbo depends on the amount of water. Gumbo is best served over mounds of hot rice in a large flat soup bowl.

**BASIC GUMBO FILÉ**

3 quarts water	3 tablespoons flour
1 onion, quartered	1½ teaspoons salt
3 cloves garlic	Pepper
½ bell pepper	Oysters (½ pint and up)
3 tablespoons oil or bacon drippings	Shrimp (⅔ pound and up)
	1 teaspoon filé

Let vegetables simmer in water until they fall apart. Mash on plate, discarding pepper skin. Return pulp to water. Make dark roux of oil and flour, stirring constantly. Slowly stir in seasoned water, then salt and pepper. Cook 5 minutes. Add shrimp and cook 15 minutes; then add oysters and simmer 5 more minutes. Filé should be added after gumbo is removed from heat, just before serving. Allow to stand 5 minutes after stirring in filé. Serves 4.

The roux should be thicker for an oyster gumbo than one without because of the water exuded by oysters.

See Basic Roux in Meat Section.

THE EDITORS

**CHICKEN OKRA GUMBO**

1 spring fryer (about 2 pounds)	3 tablespoons shortening or bacon drippings (from that used to fry chicken)
1½ pounds fresh okra	2 tablespoons flour
1 fresh tomato, chopped	3 quarts water
1 large onion, chopped	Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons shortening	

Cut up chicken; dredge with flour, salt, and pepper. Fry until brown. Fry okra with tomato and onion in the shortening. Make a roux in heavy skillet with grease from fried chicken and flour. Brown roux. Add fried chicken and the vegetables. Stir for a few minutes. Add water. Salt and pepper to taste. Cook for about 2 hours. Serves 6.

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