

# The Whole Okra

A Seed to Stem Celebration

Chris Smith

Cookbooks / Vegetables / Gardening  
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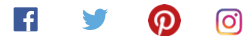
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**A foray into the history of okra and its importance in the American South, including celebrity recipes for gumbos and stews, okra pickles, tofu, marshmallow, paper, and more.**

Chris Smith's first encounter with okra was of the worst kind: slimy fried okra at a greasy-spoon diner. Despite that dismal introduction, Smith developed a fascination with okra that led him to discover an amazing range of delicious ways to cook and eat it, along with ingenious and surprising ways to process the plant from tip-to-tail: pods, leaves, flowers, seeds, and stalks. Obsessed and inspired, he talked okra with chefs, food historians, academics, farmers, homesteaders, and gardeners. The result is *The Whole Okra: A Seed to Stem Celebration*, a roving and rich collection of okra history, lore, recipes, craft projects, growing advice, and so much more.

*The Whole Okra* is foremost a food-lover's handbook, but Smith also provides practical tips and techniques for home and market gardeners, including plantings methods and non-food recipes. Classic recipes like fried okra pods (as well as unexpected delights like okra seed pancakes and okra flower vodka) are included, along with dishes from some of America's most beloved chefs, including: Okra Fries by award-winning chef Vivian Howard, Okra Soup by culinary historian Michael Twitty, Limpin' Susan by chef BJ Dennis, Bhindi Masala by chef Meherwan Irani, and Spicy Okra by Marcus Samuelsson.

Smith has grown over 75 varieties of okra—from Langston Longhorn to Louisiana Green Velvet—and he shares each nuance in flavor, texture, and color; the best-tasting varieties; and his own personal favorites. His wry humor and seed-to-stem enthusiasm for his subject infuse every chapter with just the right mix of fabulous recipes and culinary tips, unique projects, and little-known facts about this vagabond vegetable with such varied potential.

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**Author availability:** Asheville, NC, or by phone or arrangement



**Chris Smith** is a garden writer and homesteading consultant who serves on the board of Slow Food Asheville. When he is not okra-ing he can sometimes be found at Sow True Seed, an Asheville-based open-pollinated seed company. *The Whole Okra* is his first book. Find out more at [indefenseofokra.com/blog](http://indefenseofokra.com/blog)

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**PRAISE FOR**

# THE WHOLE OKRA

“A love song long overdue. It is anything and everything you wanted to know about this hallmark ingredient . . . Chris Smith [is] your leader on a journey through the world of *The Whole Okra*.”

—Michael Twitty

“Chris Smith is my absolute hero. He has written the definitive book on okra. *The Whole Okra* is packed with tips, techniques, gardening advice, and recipes. It’s an absolute must-have for okra devotees.”

—Virginia Willis

“An amazing encyclopedia of our most misunderstood vegetable. *The Whole Okra* is a long anticipated contribution to the foodways of the American South.”

—Sean Brock

“In this era of climate change, it is exciting to learn about okra’s many unique uses as high-protein flour, strong fiber, handcrafted paper, and high-quality oil.”

—Ira Wallace

“With humor and unflagging optimism for his subject, Smith melds meticulous research with firsthand experience working with dozens of varieties of okra. *The Whole Okra* is a celebration for okra fans, and may lead to the conversion of at least a few okra haters.”

—Barbara Pleasant

“Okra is delicious, versatile, plentiful, and worthy of the attention it gets in *The Whole Okra*. If you are an okra lover, this book is an affirmation, filled with interesting stories and great ideas for using pods, flowers, and more. If you are not yet an okra lover, Chris Smith’s enthusiasm may well convert you.”

—Sandor Katz

“Smith has put together a witty and well-written book . . . with historical context and creative uses for one of the South’s favorite and most debated exports.”

—Ian Boden

“Chris Smith’s comical, creative style of writing drew me in from the very beginning. His descriptions of okra’s infinite potential will inspire readers to dive deep into the heart and soul of what is possible in the garden and in the kitchen.”

—Katrina Blair

“OMG. Who’d a thought brilliant and marvelous would be used to describe a book about this most unlikely topic? No garden/foodie geek will be able to put down this insightful, witty, humorous master piece.”

—Felder Rushing,

