1. Stir-fry okra in 2 tablespoons olive oil for 10 minutes. Place in baking dish alternating layers with drained corn.

2. Prepare white sauce by heating remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in saucepan over low heat and blending in whole wheat flour. Cook oil and flour mixture 1 to 2 minutes.

3. Add skim milk all at once, cooking quickly and stirring constantly until mixture thickens.

4. Stir in cheese until blended.

5. Pour mixture over vegetables. Sprinkle bread crumbs over casserole. Bake at 350º F for approximately 45 minutes, until casserole is heated through and the crumbs have browned.

Yield: 8, 1 cup servings

Nutrition Analysis: 220 calories; 9 g total fat; 2 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 5 mg cholesterol; 340 mg sodium; 24 g total carbohydrate; 4 g dietary fiber; 9 g protein; 20% recommended allowance for vitamin C; 20% recommended allowance for calcium; 8% recommended allowance for iron.

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Kentucky Okra

**SEASON:** June through September

**NUTRITION FACTS:** Okra is a good source of vitamin C, folic acid, and soluble fiber, which helps lower cholesterol, reducing the risk of heart disease. It contains only 20 calories in a ½ cup serving.

**SELECTION:** Select small, crisp, tender pods, 2 to 4 inches long. Pods should be free from blemishes. Pods that have passed their prime will have a dull, dry appearance, contain coarse fibers, and taste stringy.

**STORAGE:** Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Okra will keep only 2 to 3 days before it starts to deteriorate.

**PREPARATION:** Wash okra pods before cooking. Cut off stem end, leaving small pods whole. Cut large pods in ½-inch slices.

Okra exudes a unique juice that will thicken soups and stews. The taste complements tomatoes, onions, corn, and fish stock.

**FREEZING:** The best method for long-term storage is freezing. Okra must be blanched before freezing to hold the flavor and quality. It will keep in the freezer for one year.

**OKRA**

Kentucky Proud Project
County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Kentucky, Nutrition and Food Science students

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