

chillis Okra

Okra is a close relative of ornamental hibiscus.



okra

About the plant:

The edible portion of okra is the immature seedpod which resembles a five pointed star when cut into cross-sections.

In the kitchen: The slimy texture of okra is a result of its mucilage, which is a mixture of carbohydrate molecules and proteins that help plants retain water. Mucilage is beneficial when utilized as a thickener in soups and stews such as gumbo, or can be minimized if the okra is fried or baked.

In the garden:

Okra flourishes when it is planted with melons and cucumbers since they all enjoy the same growing conditions.

Health: This vegetable, a cousin of the cotton plant, is rich in cholesterol-lowering fiber that is also known to help regulate blood sugar levels. People suffering from Type 2 diabetes or high cholesterol would benefit from including more okra in their diets.

One green or red bell pepper provides over 100% of the Daily Value for vitamin C with only 25 calories.



chillis

About the plant: The active ingredient that makes chillis so spicy, capsaicin, evolved to protect the seeds of the fruit from digestion by mammals. Birds are immune to its effects because they swallow the fruit whole; however, mammals who chew and grind the fruit are affected by the heat. Despite the ingenious tool designed to repel mammals, humans have fallen in love—chillis are the most widely grown spice in the world!

Did you know? The pungency of chillis is measured in

Scoville units. A higher Scoville score means the chilli is more spicy and pungent. Bell peppers range from 0-600 Scoville units, jalapeños are around 2,500-10,000, serranos are 10,000-25,000 and the hottest are habaneros ranging anywhere from 80,000-150,000 Scoville units.

Quench the burn! If your mouth is on fire, the two best, yet temporary, remedies are to get something ice-cold into your mouth, or something solid and rough, like rice, crackers or a spoonful of sugar! Cold liquids cool your taste receptors down whereas rough foods distract your nerves with a different type of signal. Maybe that's why chips with spicy salsa are so great together!

Health: With their show-stopping colors, chillis are exploding with vitamin C, which is vital for immune health and skin protection from UV damage. One green or red pepper has over 100% of the Daily Value for vitamin C with only 25 calories.