

Association of Okra Growers

Press Kit
By
Holly Roberts

The Okra Association of Producers



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Fact Sheet

Okra Information:

Okra possibly originated around Ethiopia, and was cultivated by the Egyptians by the 12th century B.C. Okra came to the Caribbean and United States in the 1700s. It is a tropical plant, which grows best in warmer climates. It's ready to harvest around 60 days when the blooms begin to open, and is slightly tough. They have to be picked about 4-5 days after flowering in the fall. Okra varies in shades of green, and can be smooth or has ribbed surfaces.

Okra Nutrition Value:

- Okra is a good source of vitamin C, A, K and B6.
- Okra contains 4% iron and 8% calcium.
- Okra is low in calories, and a good source of dietary fiber.
- Okra is fat-free, which makes it ideal for weight loss

Facts about Thiamin found in Okra:

- Okra is one of the few vegetables that are a very good source of Thiamin.
- Thiamine helps the body cells convert carbohydrate into energy.
- Thiamin acts as an antioxidant, protecting the body from generative effects of aging, alcohol consumption, and smoking.
- Every cell of the body requires Thiamin to form the fuel the body runs on called ATP.

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Backgrounder “Did you know?”

Our expertise is Okra. Okra is easy to grow and is little affected by pests and insects. The vegetable is nutritious, because it offers calcium, iron, vitamins, folate, and more.

About our company:

The Association of Okra Producers began in 1985 as a small local farm. The association grew into a corporation that now has headquarters in 5 southern states. The Okra Grower’s Association is dedicated to providing the best grown Okra to America. Our mission is to educate the consumers on the nutritional benefits of okra, to lead to a healthier America. The association supports 500 farmers across America as they work to provide healthy delicious okra.

Mission Statement:

The Okra Grower’s Association works to help our farmers grow the best for our consumers for a healthier nation.

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Audience Analysis

Many people have been lead to believe okra might taste like other green vegetable they don't enjoy, and they haven't even tried okra. People need more information about okra to see how the vegetable can benefit them. Okra provides a variety of benefits which appeals to a wide audience of consumers. The audience ranges from people seeking to lose weight to pregnant women.

Okra is high in Folate which helps prevent birth defects. Women who plan to get pregnant need at least 4 milligrams of folate before they get pregnant. Since folate helps produce and maintain new cells it is important for women to consume okra during the rapid cell division and growth such as infancy and pregnancy.

Okra is also highly recommended to people seeking weight loss. Okra is fat free and is recommended for people seeking to become more fit, or lose weight. Diabetics also are recommended to eat okra because of the high amount of calcium.

Okra can also help people enhance their beauty by causing your hair to have more bounce. It appeals to people also who suffer from constipation, and need a laxative.

The audience for Okra varies, but it appeals to a wide range of consumers

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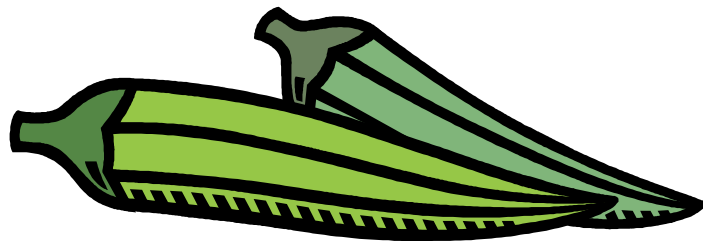
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Cover Sheet

I would focus on the internet to display my press kit. The internet would reach consumers who would be searching for information about okra or healthy food. I would update with press releases, and recipes for people. The press kit would be featured on the website also to give anyone potentially interested an overview of what is included in the press kit.

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For Immediate Release

Research Shows Okra Provides Many Health Benefits

Franklin Springs, GA – February 26, 2010 – Kenneth Roberts, representative of the Okra Grower’s Association, appeared at the Swails Center on February 26, and announced the new research findings of the health benefits of Okra.

“The Okra Grower association has found that okra strengthens hair, decreases the chances of birth defects, helps constipation, and is recommended for weight loss.” Roberts said.

Okra contains folate, which women who plan to get pregnant need at least 4 milligrams of before they get pregnant. Since folate helps produce and maintain new cells it is important for women to consume okra during the rapid cell division and growth such as infancy and pregnancy.

Roberts also announced how okra can help contribute to a healthier nation. “Okra is low in calories, dietary fiber, and is fat-free,” Roberts said.

Roberts formerly served as a manager of the Okra’s Grower Association’s local department in Raleigh North Carolina. He was able to improve the amount of okra grown and contributed to increasing its sales in that area.

About The Okra Association of Producers

The Okra Association of Producers is a company invests in the farming of okra, and employs about 200 farmers. The company is known as the leader in providing healthy grown Okra emphasizing the need for better nutrition.

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For Immediate Release

Scientific Study finds Mulch Color Affects Okra Growth

Franklin Springs, GA – May 4, 2010 – American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS) recently did a study on how color affects okra growth. Research evaluated the effects of colored plastic mulches with and without row covers on the growth and earliness of fruit production on okra. The results showed significant differences in the growth of okra.

“We tested the effects of mulch color on okra by growing the vegetable, direct-seeded in single rows, on sandy loam soil in Shorter, Alabama,” said Garry G. Gordon of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service. Gordon and colleagues from the Auburn University Department of Horticulture gathered the results.

Treatments consisted of five mulch colors, which included black, white, red, silver, and blue. These colors were installed either with or without spun-bonded row cover. Soil temperatures were 4 to 7 Celsius lower than air temperatures in all treatments.

“From the results, we can conclude that the use of dark plastic mulch is advantageous to growers of okra in climates that do not have cool springs,” Gordon noted.

The use of darker colored plastic mulches increased the earliness of their growth and total yield of okra compared with bare soil with and without row cover. Early yield was generally greatest with dark mulch colors, and combined total yield was greatest when black and blue plastic mulch were used.

About The American Society for Horticultural Science

ASHS was founded in 1903 and is the largest organization dedicated to advancing all facets of horticultural research, education, and application.

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For Immediate Release

Okra is Food of Choice for Chefs to Include in Recipes

Franklin Springs, GA – May 4, 2010 – Harold’s Kitchen has decided to begin serving okra grown by farmers from The Okra Association of Producers. Okra has become a popular vegetable used in restaurant foods. It’s notoriety as a popular “soul food” has boosted its popularity so that it is served as a side dish in many restaurants.

“I always include okra in vegetable soup. The okra is a vital part of the soup since it makes the majority of the vegetables included in the recipe,” Chef Tabatha Beard said.

Harold’s Kitchen strives for healthy food. Many chefs recommend frying okra to preserve many of the nutrients found in the vegetable.

“We strive to serve our customers the best. After the recent demands for okra, and research finding the benefits of okra we want to include it as a side dish of its own to customers.” Harold Smith said.

Harold’s Kitchen will begin serving okra as a side dish on May 15th with the order of any entrée.

Harold’s Kitchen

Harold Smith opened the restaurant in 2001, and has continued to serve the community with a variety of Southern foods. The restaurant has won 5 awards, including best restaurant in the Northeast Ga. Region.

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For Immediate Release

The Okra Association of Producers to Fundraise for Tennessee Flood Victims

Franklin Springs, GA – May 4, 2010 – The Okra Association of Producers will be holding a fundraiser on May 8th, 2010 for the victims of the flooding in Tennessee. The event will have an okra cook-off, and people will showcase their own special okra recipes. A screening of a new documentary that goes behind the scenes of The Okra Association of Producers will also be shown.

“We had to help after seeing the level of destruction caused. I remember seeing the images on television, and I immediately called Ralph to organize the event.” Harold Smith said.

Ralph Donald is an event organizer for the association, and has organized previous events such as the fundraiser for the Haiti earthquake victims and the Katrina flood victims.

“I felt like Harold had read my mind. This event will donate all proceeds to the Red Cross to help the victims of the flood.” Donald said.

The flash floods occurred unexpectedly in Nashville, and thousands were sent fleeing. Residents had to be rescued out of their homes. The water led to the deaths of 17 people in Tennessee, including 10 in Nashville. Donald and Smith both felt the need to contribute after seeing the disaster.

About The Association of Okra Producers

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The Association of Okra Producers



Tim Cooper Shares His Life of Growing Okra

For most people okra is just a vegetable, but for Tim Cooper, owner of Cooper’s Berry Farm, it has been a lifelong passion. Cooper enjoys sharing his lifelong earned knowledge of okra as he relaxes at his home in Morton, Miss. on a sunny Wednesday afternoon. He reflects and departs with information that explains the mystery of how he has become a successful farmer.

“I get the ground ready, then fertilize, and plant a roll of seed,” Cooper says. He instantly begins by giving recommendations and advice on how to grow the vegetable. The fondness of his career is evident in his voice as he speaks about okra and the benefits he has found from growing it. A farmer needs to be very aware of the weather. Usually he begins growing okra once the cold is passed, which is usually mid-April. “It is overall a fairly easy vegetable to grow,” says Cooper.

Cooper discusses the popularity of the vegetable at the farmer’s market where he brings okra to sell. Many people buy okra at peak times during the year, and then when the season begins to end, the consumers disappear as well. Many farmers choose not to grow okra though, and instead opt for other vegetables. “Not many farmers choose to grow it, so it’s in demand,” says Cooper.

Okra has earned enough popularity at the markets to become a vegetable he has chosen to continue growing. Cooper has been around this career since he was a child raised in a farming

family. The fact he has decided to continue growing okra based on the popularity speaks well of the vegetable.

“Sometimes buying can be slow, but I always get enough people,” Cooper says. Okra has always been a consistent seller for Cooper at the Farmer’s Market. He has grown many other vegetables, but okra is still one of his choices to maintain growing so he can support his wife and himself.

Cooper does warn that some people are allergic to okra and they do need to be cautious in handling it. “If you are allergic, I recommend wearing gloves if you have to pick okra.” He advises.

At age 75, Cooper had to decide to cut back on the amount of farming, which leaves okra something he is dependent on for income when he takes it to the market. A lack of labor has also contributed to having to cut back planting vegetables. He reflects on an early start in farming, and after attending college, still felt he wanted to come back to continue farming. “I immediately came back to the farm right after I graduated,” says Cooper.

Cooper discusses some of the positives he has found about growing okra. He says it’s always fresh, grows tall, and when it gets old it bends so you can easily cut it. People in the area he lives in also enjoy okra. “People like it, and you gather it only every 2 or 3 days,” He says.

Cooper conveys a wide interest in okra as he continues to explain the process of growing okra. He says it is about the width of his hand, and though it is difficult to grow at times, it is overall

easier than other vegetables to get started. “The pests are also not very attracted to attacking okra,” says Cooper.

Cooper admits there are also negatives to growing okra, but he believes the positives outweigh the bad. He first admits that okra can sting your hands while picking because of the texture of the vegetable. “It can be a little difficult to begin growing at the beginning of the season,” says Cooper

Cooper can plan ahead with okra and knows he has a supply to plant next year from the crop he’ll have this year. Many seeds come from okra which provides a huge supply for the next year. “Easy planning makes growing okra preferable also. I can rely on a yearly supply,” Cooper says.

With okra always insuring support for him and his family, he now sits comfortably enjoying the farming he is still capable of. Since labor is difficult to find, he is able to grow okra and a few other crops to insure his wellbeing. His wife automatically knows who to refer to when you mention okra because of her husband’s knowledge on the vegetable. “I’ve spent my lifetime farming, and wouldn’t change that at all,” says Cooper.

Tim Cooper has a bachelor’s degree in agriculture engineering, but decided to return to farming. As the interview comes to an end Cooper chuckles about his loss of hearing, and it’s evident that he is content with who he is and the years to come. Tim Cooper’s choice of income will always be okra, and he has the years of wisdom to show that’s his calling.

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The Association of Okra Producers Crisis Plan



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The following person is our primary crisis manager and will serve as the company spokesperson in an emergency:

Name: Lee Moore
Primary Phone: (706) 890-9885
Secondary Phone: (706)245-8754
Email: s.lmoore@op.org

If the person is unable to manage the crisis, the person below will succeed in management:

Name: Janet Misch
Primary Phone: (706) 542-7855
Secondary Phone: (706) 489-2854
Email: s.jm@op.org

Disaster Plan:

Foliage Diseases: Ascochyta is a common foliage disease for okra. The plan for if this disease occurs is to always ensure we supply growers with the tools to prevent this disease and make sure enough seeds are supplied so they can plant a small extra supply.

Root Knot Nematodes: Root knot is a species of nematode which causes galls or swellings on plant roots. To control this problem planting will be on a solid stand three months before the first killing frost of fall.

Fireants: Fireants feed on the base of developing blooms before the bloom buds open causing them to abort. To prevent this problem fireant mounds will be located and bait will be used around the outside of garden to kill the mounds. All farmers will be supplied a bag of bait.

Media Statement:

“Our company strives to provide the best okra to consumers and carriers. We ensure our farmers are equipped and prepared to fight any disaster that may attempt to attack their okra. “

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Dear Board of Okra Producer's Association:

The past year has been great, and I believe the next year will be better with new ideas implemented. The public needs more information about okra's benefits and the various recipes it can be included in. Growers can be supplied better information and products to help their crop of okras. The company has potential to improve upon our communication with growers and consumers.

The new ideas will make for an exciting and more enjoyable year. I plan to utilize the website to update each month what is happening with the company to communicate with all people who are interested in staying up to date on news. Consumers can find recipes, and sales. Investors can find information about the sales of the okra, and how well we are financially doing. Growers may check out the website to find information about growing the plant, and recommendations and reminders on how to keep the plants healthy.

My next idea would be to have the growers sign up for a newsletter to mail monthly to their houses. The newsletter will encourage growers, and provide them with the latest information about growing okras. We'll also provide feature stories on farmers working hard to provide quality okra.

These ideas will improve our communication in the company, and help consumers be aware of the benefits of okra. I look forward to working with the company next year, and seeing these ideas go forth.

Sincerely,

Holly Roberts