

Okra Tonkatsu

1 pound okra, split from stem to tip
Flour
2 eggs, beaten with a little water
Panko breadcrumbs
Oil, for frying
Tonkatsu sauce
Kewpie May

I've been resistant to doing a fried okra recipe. For one, I don't like it very much. For another, I get the sense that most people around these parts already know how to fry perfect okra, so what's the point? But this week, it felt like it was time to fry some okra. In a somewhat hazy, mid-dinner conversation with my fiancé, where more than one bottle of wine had been consumed (I find this is a perfect state of mind for recipe contemplation when I'm stumped), he said, "If you're going to fry it, you should do some kind of Asian sauce" and a giant, blinding lightbulb went off in my brain: TONKATSU. That amazing, delicious, deep fried, breaded pork that hails from Japan and gets covered with one of the most delicious sauces known to mankind. The rest is history.



Breading and frying the okra is simple enough. But you must get the sauce, and it's not really something you can make at home. You can try, but it's like making your own ketchup. It's a lot of work, and it's not as good as what you buy in the store. You will have to go to an Asian market or order the sauce online. I recommend Bulldog brand. While you're at the Asian store, buy Kewpie mayo. It's mayonnaise seasoned with sugar and extra salt and vinegar, and yeah, MSG. It's delicious on everything. Especially fried things.

First, heat a few cups of oil in a deep pan over medium heat until the temp reaches 375.

Lightly toss the cut okra in some flour until any moisture is absorbed. My okra wasn't slimy at all, and there wasn't a lot of moisture on the okra, but you still need to flour it. Then swirl the floury okra in the beaten egg until evenly coated, and then dip the wet now wet okra in panko breadcrumbs, pressing down so there are plenty of breadcrumbs attached to the okra. Fry immediately until golden brown. This will only take a few minutes, but you may need to do it in batches, allowing the oil to heat back up between batches. Sprinkle with salt as soon as the okra comes out of the fryer before the okra dries.

Serve hot, with tonkatsu sauce and kewpie mayo on the side.