My favorite movie is the original Invasion of the Body Snatchers in which plants from outer space duplicate humans and take over their lives. Now fast forward to our nation's capital in the Veg-U-Cation here at the Agriculture Department farmer's market. Chief Veg-U-cator Laura Popielski and I make an astounding discovery. What is that thing?

Laura Popielski: It is an edible seed pod. I kind of thought it looked like it came from outer space?

Gary Crawford: Outer space Laura? What would your shrink say about that?

Voiceover: Plants from another the world? Mad as a March hare.

Gary Crawford: Not really just slightly off. Actually what we're talking about here is.

Laura Popielski: Okra!

Gary Crawford: Also known as.

Laura Popielski: Ladies fingers.

Gary Crawford: Also known as.

Laura Popielski: Gumbo.

Laura Popielski: Yes.

Gary Crawford: OK now many Southerners...

Laura Popielski: I was really hoping that this interview isn't medi-"okra"!

Gary Crawford: Southerners especially around New Orleans area may be familiar with okra but most folks in other regions may not know about this plant which is related to the hibiscus which produces green or purple seed pods which are entirely edible. Now to me the ones you have here. Laura they look elongated like thin green jalapeno peppers so certainly don't taste that way.

Laura Popielski: It's a very mild taste you could put it in lots of different dishes and it can really take on the flavors that you cook it with.

Gary Crawford: And Laura you've been telling people here not to just steam it or boiler that eat it by itself. Not very good that way so what would you do with it?

Laura Popielski: Roasted or grilled whole. But you can also chop it into about 1-inch pieces and sauté it with garlic and butter or olive oil and salt and pepper and if you add something acidic to your okra. It won't be as slimy and a lot of people very put off by the texture of okra when it's cooked. But if you cook it at a high temperature very quickly and you use something acidic like lime or lemon juice or tomatoes or vinegar in your recipe it will cut down on the slime.

Gary Crawford: Now many people still say they don't like okra. Now Laura you say it's because they haven't had it done right. Hasn’t had that Okra epiphany such as a really good New Orleans gumbo dish. So Laura what turned you on to okra?
Laura Popielksi: [00:01:59] I remember my okra epiphany. It was in New Orleans. And it was in gumbo and it was magical. And then the second time I had an okra epiphany he was when I had a deep fried at a Texas barbecue restaurant people kind of half inch pieces and bread them and fry them. It's not exactly the healthiest option but worth trying.

Gary Crawford: [00:02:19] But still Okra is a much ignored the vegetable even maligned by some people.

Laura Popielksi: [00:02:23] I'm really pushing for okra. I feel bad for it. We gotta support okra.

Gary Crawford: [00:02:28] Yeah. And of course you've even written a Broadway musical about it starring "Okra" Winfrey it Okra-homa!

Laura Popielksi: [00:02:33] [Singing] Okra-homa I love you roast ,pickled or sautéed!

Gary Crawford: [00:02:38] Pickles sound liked tickled there. But anyway for more ways to use okra. Go on line. To What's cooking. USDA What's Cooking. USDA.

Laura Popielksi: [00:02:46] Good tasting, fine, Okra-homa. Okra-homa's OK!

Laura Popielksi: [00:02:52] Go out in the world eating it and evangelizing it for okra.