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# Pickles and Relishes BISGARDIES



Federal Cooperative Extension Service  
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# *Pickles and Relishes*

## **METHODS, INGREDIENTS, EQUIPMENT**

The art of making pickles and relishes has not been lost, but gone are the days of making them by putting in a lump of this and a pinch of that. Modern homemakers want up-to-date recipes that are easy to follow and result in perfect pickles every time. Speedy methods are preferred to the long-brine methods of the past. The demand for pickles and relishes has been increased with casual western living and frequent outdoor cooking and eating. Oregon homemakers are more interested than ever in making their own tasty pickles and relishes.

### **The ABC's of pickle making**

Select only perfect cucumbers for pickles. Those grown with plenty of moisture and sunshine are preferred. Pick as near the time for use as possible. If the cucumbers must be held, refrigerate before washing. Do not hold them more than 24 hours. When ready to use, wash them, but do not bruise the skin. Be sure all blossoms are removed, as they contain enzymes that can cause softening of the pickles.

Choose a modern, tested recipe for best results. Twenty-five years ago vinegar usually was only 3% acid. Today's vinegar is 4 to 6% acid. Using grandma's recipe with today's ingredients may result in pickles which are shriveled or too sour.

### **Ingredients**

Salt especially prepared for pickling or pure, granulated dairy salt should be used. Avoid salts treated to insure freeflowing. Iodized salt is not recommended. Salt is used to draw out the juices from the fruit or cucumber, to toughen the cellular wall, and to prevent the growth of molds, yeasts, and bacteria which could cause spoilage. Too strong a salt solution may cause shriveling. One too weak will not prevent spoilage.

Either white or cider vinegar may be used. White is preferred if the food color needs to be kept light,

as in pickled onions or cauliflower. Cider vinegar gives a more mellow flavor than white vinegar and is preferred by many.

Granulated sugar usually is used. Either beet or cane sugar gives satisfactory results. Some special recipes call for more highly flavored brown sugars.

Select fresh spices. Spices which have been stored for several months have lost some of their flavor. Most recipes call for mixed pickling spices. Spice companies employ highly skilled persons to blend their mixtures. Trust their judgment unless you are very familiar with individual spices. Use the whole spice in pickle making. Tie the measured amount loosely in a thin cloth so the syrup can circulate through it freely. Remove before packing. Most mixtures contain red peppers. If your family does not care for their hot flavor, remove them before using the rest of the spices.

If possible use soft water. The minerals that make water hard also interfere with the pickling process.

Do not add artificial preservatives. Modern methods and recipes result in crisp, tasty products without such additions. Added vegetable color, while not harmful, looks artificial. Pickles should be olive-green in color.

Never use copper containers to make the pickles green. The green colored solution formed is poisonous.

## **Equipment**

Choose materials that will not be attacked by salt or vinegar. Stoneware, unchipped enamel, stainless steel, or glass are all good. Be sure to scald crocks before using. Avoid letting copper utensils or galvanized metal come in contact with pickles.

## **Packing pickles**

In some recipes directions call for packing raw cucumbers into suitable jars. Other recipes direct that pickles be made, first, in large quantities, and then packed into containers for storing. It is advisable to seal filled jars before storing. Usually, a jar will seal if boiling syrup is poured over hot pickles in a warm jar and a canning lid is applied. Or sealing can be done by putting canning lids on standard jars, placing the jars in three inches of water in a water bath canner, simmering for 10 to 15 minutes, then removing and cooling the jars.

The following recipes make use of modern ingredients and methods. They include the types of pickles and relishes most often requested in Oregon.

## RECIPES

### Sweet Pickle Chips

Thick, crisp chunks with a rich, different flavor.

8 medium-sized cucumbers (2 to 3 pounds)	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt
3 medium-sized onions (1 pound)	2 quarts water for brine
	2 cups vinegar
	2 cups water

#### Syrup

$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups brown sugar (packed)	2 teaspoons celery seed
2 cups vinegar	1 teaspoon mustard seed
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup water	1 teaspoon turmeric
	2 teaspoons salt

Wash cucumbers. Peel and wash onions. Cut vegetables into thick slices. Soak separately overnight in brine made by combining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup salt with 2 quarts water. Drain thoroughly. Combine vinegar and 2 cups water. Add drained cucumbers and onions. Cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and discard liquid. Pack into hot, sterilized jars. Combine ingredients for syrup and boil 5 minutes. Pour boiling hot over pickles; seal at once. Makes 3 pints.

### 8-Day Sweet Pickle Chunks

Simple-to-make, family favorites that stay extra crisp.

20 medium cucumbers (1"x5" size)	2 tablespoons mixed pickling spice
8 cups sugar	5 teaspoons salt
4 cups cider vinegar	

Cover cucumbers with boiling water and allow to stand overnight. Drain, and discard liquid. Repeat for the next 3 mornings.

On the fifth morning, drain and slice cucumbers into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces. Combine sugar, spice, salt, and vinegar. Bring to a boil and pour over cucumbers. Let stand two full days.

On the third day bring syrup to a boil. Pack cucumbers into jars. Cover with boiling syrup and seal immediately.

Makes 5 pints.

### Bread and Butter Pickles

These pickles are a "must" for picnic fare.

4 quarts cucumber slices	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt	2 quarts sliced onions
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Measure cucumbers. Add salt and stir carefully. Cover with ice cubes and allow to stand 2 or 3 hours until all the cucumbers are crisp and cold. Ice helps

keep the thin slices from breaking. Add more ice if needed. Drain. Add sliced onions.

#### Syrup

4 cups sugar	1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 quart cider vinegar	1 teaspoon turmeric (optional)
2 tablespoons mustard seed	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon white pepper (optional)
1 tablespoon celery seed	

Bring syrup to boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Add cucumbers and onions and bring just to the boiling point. Pack in  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint or pint jars. Adjust sealing lids and process in water bath for 30 minutes to complete the cooking and seal. Makes 8 pints.

### Whole Sweet Pickles

Using tiny cucumbers these easy-to-make whole sweet pickles make perfect party food.

1 gallon small cucumbers	4 cups vinegar
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt	1 cup water
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ gallons water	8 cups sugar
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup mixed pickling spice	

Wash 1 gallon small cucumbers carefully, being sure to remove the blossoms. Place in crock. Cover with boiling water. Make sure the cucumbers are covered with water. Drain and cover with fresh boiling water each day for 5 more days.

On the seventh day cover with a weak brine made by dissolving the salt in the 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  gallons water.

On the eighth day tie the spices loosely in a cloth bag. Make a syrup of the vinegar, water, sugar, and spice. Boil for 20 minutes. Pierce each cucumber with a long needle or cut off the end to allow the syrup to penetrate the pickle. Pack the pickles into jars, pour boiling syrup over them, and seal immediately. Makes 8 pints.

### Asier-Danish Ripe Cucumber Pickles

This recipe, originally from Denmark, uses orange skinned, ripe cucumbers.

12 medium cucumbers, ripe	1 teaspoon celery seed
16 small onions, peeled	1 teaspoon mustard
2 tablespoons salt	1 teaspoon ginger
2 cups white vinegar	1 teaspoon salt
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper
	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric

Select medium-sized ripe cucumbers. Peel, cut in half lengthwise, and remove seeds. Cut into 1-inch cubes. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons salt and allow to stand overnight. Drain and wipe cucumbers dry. Combine vinegar, spices, and salt. Bring to boil. Add the

onions and simmer until just tender. Add the cucumbers. Bring syrup just to a boil and remove cucumbers immediately.

Pack into jars, adding a small sprig of dill to each jar. Seal.

## Quick Dill Pickles

These are tasty dills, easy to make in small amounts when the pickles are just right.

Cucumbers	2 red pepper pods
2 heads dill weed	(optional)
1 grape leaf	1 quart vinegar
2 cloves garlic	2 quarts water
	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup salt

Pack medium-sized cucumbers into quart or 2-quart jars, being careful not to bruise the cucumbers. Cukes may be sliced in quarters or halves if desired. Add dill weed, grape leaf, garlic, and red pepper. Make a brine of vinegar, water, and salt. Pour boiling hot over the packed jars and seal at once. Allow to stand at least 2 weeks before using.

## Ground Pickle Relish

4 medium-sized onions	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt
3 dozen medium cucumbers	4 cups sugar
3 red peppers	6 cups vinegar
3 green peppers	3 tablespoons mixed pickling spice

Grind onions, cucumbers, red and green peppers through the coarse grind of the food chopper. Add salt. Stir well and allow to stand overnight. Drain. Heat sugar, vinegar, and spices together. Add ground mixture and cook over low heat until just tender. Pack in jars and seal.

## Indian Summer Relish

An end-of-the-season relish using green tomatoes. A "must" with beef roasts.

3 quarts green tomatoes	1 teaspoon turmeric
1 quart onions	1 teaspoon cinnamon
3 cups vinegar	1 teaspoon allspice
4 cups sugar	1 teaspoon cloves
	1 teaspoon salt

Grind enough green tomatoes to make 3 quarts, and enough onions to make 1 quart. Combine the vinegar, sugar, and spices. Bring to boiling and add the tomatoes and onions. Simmer till tender. Pack at once into jars and seal.

## Tomato Butter

An unusual spread to be used when a sweet, rather than spicy, tomato sauce is desired.

5 quarts ground ripe tomatoes	1 teaspoon cinnamon
3 cups brown sugar	1 teaspoon cloves
2 cups white sugar (granulated)	1 teaspoon allspice
1 pint vinegar	3 medium onions (ground)
	1 tablespoon salt

Peel and grind the tomatoes and onions. Combine vinegar, sugar, and spices in a heavy saucepan. Bring to boil. Add the ground vegetables and simmer over low heat until thick. Stir frequently to prevent sticking. Or place in oven, heated to 300° F., stirring frequently to prevent a dry crust on the surface. When mixture is thick, fill jars and seal immediately.

## PICKLE PROBLEMS

Unfortunately, little usually can be done to correct pickling failures. But understanding why pickles were not perfect may help prevent the problem next time. Listed below are some of the common failures and the reasons why.

**Hollow pickles:** Cucumbers used were hollow when picked because of faulty growth. Or they may have been held too long before processing. Grind these and use for relish. Always check for hollow centers by slicing through several cucumbers before purchasing a quantity for pickling.

**Soft pickles:** Brine used was too weak to prevent the action of spoilage organisms; high contamination of yeast or mold on cucumbers; scum formed during fermentation not removed promptly; storage temperature too high; pickles overcooked; part of pickle not covered by brining or pickling solution.

**Shriveled pickles:** Too strong a salt or vinegar solution. If noticed at the beginning of the shriveling process, further loss of liquid can be prevented by diluting the salt or vinegar solutions. Pickles with large amounts of sugar in the recipe may shrivel unless the sugar is added very slowly.

**Gray pickles:** Contact with iron kettles or with the underbase of chipped enamel ware. Avoid the use of such containers.

**Bright green pickles:** Contact with copper utensils. The copper acetate formed is harmful. Avoid the use of any utensil that adds color to pickles.

**Strong flavor:** Use of old-time recipes with modern,

stronger vinegar; failure to remove spices before packing pickles for storage; use of old spices.

Dark spots: Use of iodized salt, resulting in tiny, dark spots resembling pepper; use of ground spices rather than whole spices; spices allowed to touch pickle surface.

This leaflet was prepared by Ruth Klippstein, Extension Nutrition Specialist, Oregon State College.

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