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BRINED PICKLES

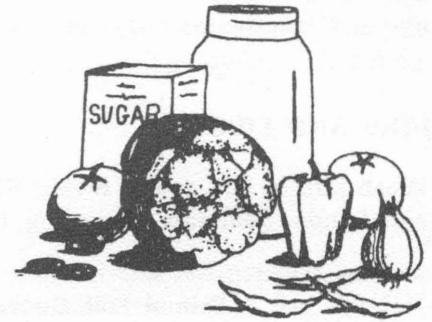
*Frances L. Reasonover**

Brined pickles add crispness, firm texture and pungent flavor to meals and snacks. They contribute some nutritive value and contain little or no fat.

Brined or fermented pickles go through a curing process of about 3 weeks. Other vegetables such as tomatoes may also be brined in the same way as dilled cucumbers.

Curing changes cucumber color from bright green to an olive or yellow green. The white interior of fresh cucumber becomes uniformly translucent. A desirable flavor is developed during curing without being excessively sour, salty or spicy.

Cucumber dills may be flavored with garlic, if desired. The skin of the pickle is tender and firm, but not hard, rubbery or shriveled. The inside is tender and firm, not soft and mushy.



INGREDIENTS

Correct proportions of vegetables, salt, vinegar and spices are essential. Measure or weigh all ingredients carefully.

Select tender vegetables for pickling. Use unwaxed cucumbers for pickling whole. The brine cannot penetrate waxed cucumbers.

Sort for uniform size.

Use vegetables as soon as possible after gathering or purchasing from the market. If the vegetables cannot be used immediately, refrigerate them or spread them where they will be well ventilated and cool. Do not use vegetables that show any evidence of mold.

Use pure granulated salt, if available. Table salt with filler to prevent caking may make the brine cloudy. Iodized salt may darken pickles.

Use a high-grade cider or white distilled vinegar of 4 to 6 percent acidity.

Use soft water if possible. If hard water is used, boil and let stand for 24 hours. Remove scum.

EQUIPMENT

Use stainless steel, aluminum or glass utensils to heat pickling liquid.

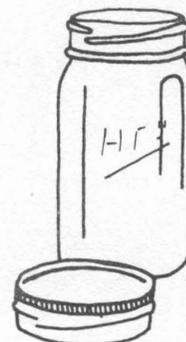
For brining or fermenting, use a crock, stone jar, large glass jar, bowl, casserole or plastic bucket. Use a heavy plate or large glass lid, which fits inside the container, to cover vegetables in the brine. Use a weight to hold the cover down and keep vegetables below the surface of the brine. A glass jar filled with water makes a good weight.

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Any large metal container may be used for a waterbath canner if it is deep enough to allow for one or two inches of water above the tops of jars and little space for boiling; has a tight-fitting lid; and has a wire or wooden rack with partitions to keep jars from touching each other and falling against the sides of the container. The waterbath heat treatment destroys organisms that cause spoilage and inactivates enzymes that may affect flavor, color and texture.

JARS AND LIDS

Wash jars in hot, soapy water. Rinse with hot water. Wash and rinse lids and bands. Seal lids according to manufacturer's directions.



Brined Dill Cucumbers

20 pounds (about 1/2 bushel) cucumbers, 3 to 6 inches in length
3/4 cup whole mixed pickling spice
2 or 3 bunches dill plant, fresh or dried (optional)
2 1/2 cups vinegar
1 3/4 cups salt, pure granulated
2 1/2 gallons water

Brining

Cover cucumbers with cold water. Wash thoroughly, using a vegetable brush; handle gently to avoid bruising. Take care to remove blossoms. Drain on rack or wipe dry.

Place half the pickles spices and a layer of dill in your chosen container. Fill with cucumbers to 3 or 4 inches from the top. Place a layer of dill and remaining spices over the top of cucumbers. (Garlic may be added, if desired.) Thoroughly mix the vinegar, salt and water and pour over the cucumbers. Cover with a heavy china or glass plate or lid that fits inside the container.

Use a weight to hold the plate down and keep the cucumbers under the brine. Cover loosely with clean cloth. Keep pickles at room temperature and remove scum daily when formed. Scum may start forming in 3 to 5 days. Do not stir pickles, but be sure they are covered completely with brine. If necessary, make additional brine, using original proportions specified in recipe.

In about 3 weeks the cucumbers will have become an olive-green color and should have a desirable flavor. Any white spots inside the fermented cucumbers will disappear in processing.

Freshening

If a less salty flavor is desired in the brined pickles, the surplus salt may be removed. Soak in fresh water or an equal part of vinegar and water until the amount of salt is removed for desired flavor.

Packing

The original brine is usually cloudy as a result of yeast development during the fermentation period. If this cloudiness is objectionable, fresh brine may be used to cover the pickles when packing them into the jars.

When making fresh brine, use 1/2 cup salt and 4 cups vinegar to 1 gallon of water. The fermentation brine generally is preferred for its added flavor and should be strained before heating to boiling.

Pack the pickles, along with some of the dill, into clean, hot quart jars; add garlic, if desired. Avoid too tight a pack. Cover with boiling brine to 1/2 inch from the top of the jar. Adjust jar lids.



Processing

Process in boiling water for 5 minutes. Start to count the processing time as soon as water returns to boiling. Caution: Do not overprocess or pickles will be soft. Having brine at boiling, jars hot, and water boiling in boiling water bath helps shorten the processing time.

Remove jars and set upright, several inches apart, on a wire rack to cool. The recipe yields about 9 to 10 quarts of pickles.

PICKLING OTHER VEGETABLES

Vegetables ordinarily used for brining are green tomatoes, green beans, green and red peppers, onions and cauliflower. Follow the same instructions for making Brined Dill Cucumbers, except use the following freshening or desalting process and recipes.

Freshening or Desalting Brined Vegetables

Remove surplus salt. To do this soak in an equal part of vinegar and water until sufficient salt is removed. This also makes the pickles plump and attractive. The brined vegetables should taste fairly salty, for the salt helps to preserve as well as give flavor.

Green Tomato Dill Pickles

Green tomatoes, if freshly picked, can be used for making dill tomato pickles. Select uniform size tomatoes in excellent condition. The amount of brine planned for 20 pounds of dill cucumbers will be sufficient for the same amount of dill tomatoes. Use Brined Dill Cucumber recipe, substituting tomatoes for cucumbers.

Mustard Pickles

1 quart brined cucumbers	2 cups brined onions
2 cups brined string beans	2 cups brined cauliflower
2 cups brined green peppers	1 cup brined sweet red peppers

Use Brined Dill Cucumber recipe substituting these amounts of vegetables for cucumbers.

Mustard Mixture

6 cups vinegar	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar	2 teaspoons tumeric powder
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup ground mustard	

Freshen the brined vegetables and cut attractively for serving and drain.

Mix the dry ingredients and add sufficient cold vinegar to make a smooth paste. Add the remaining vinegar and cook quickly until mixture is thickened. Pour while hot over the freshened vegetables. Mix well, pack into hot jars and seal.

Okra Dill Pickles

Freshly brined okra can be used in making dill pickles. Select uniform size okra with a small amount of stem.

The amount of brine planned for 20 pounds of dill cucumbers will be sufficient for the dilled okra. Use Brined Dill Cucumber recipe, substituting okra for cucumbers.

Onion Pickles

1 gallon brined small white onions
5 cups white vinegar
3 cups granulated sugar
2 tablespoons mixed pickling spices

Freshen or desalt onions. Mix the sugar and vinegar and drop in spices tied in a bag. Bring to a boil. Cover and let cool. Heat and cool several times for best flavor. Pack freshened onions into hot jars and cover with spiced vinegar and seal.

Note: More or less sugar may be added according to taste.

Spiced Pickles

3 cups vinegar
1 cup water
1½ cups sugar
Brined vegetables
1 tablespoon mustard seed
2 hot red peppers (if desired)
1 or 2 tablespoons mixed spices

Use recipe for Brined Dill Cucumbers and substitute desired vegetables for cucumbers.

Freshen or desalt brined vegetables. Mix ingredients and bring to boiling point. (More sugar may be added as desired.) Pack vegetables in hot jars. Pour hot vinegar over the freshened vegetables and seal.

Sweet Mixed Pickles

1 quart brined cucumbers
1 pint brined sliced onions
1 pint brined cut snap beans
½ pint sliced sweet red pepper
1 pint brined cut cauliflower
1 pint brined sliced green tomatoes
1 pint brined sliced green sweet peppers

Use recipe for Brined Dill Cucumbers and substitute these vegetables for cucumbers.

Freshen or desalt vegetables. Cut attractively for serving and drain. Pack into hot jars and cover with a spiced vinegar made as follows:

4 cups vinegar
3½ cups sugar
1 tablespoon celery seed
1 tablespoon mustard seed
2 hot red peppers
1 tablespoon mixed pickle spices

Tie spices in a bag. Mix sugar and vinegar together and drop in spice bag. Bring to a boil, cover and set aside to cool. If the mixture is allowed to come to a boil and cool two or three times, more flavor will be extracted from the spice bag. Remove the spice bag and pour liquid over vegetables which have been packed into hot jars and seal.

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