

Making Fresh Pack Pickles

Sliced Dill Pickles (Recipe from Bernadin Book of Home Preserving, p 73)

Materials:

- 5 mason jars (500 ml),
- new lids for each jar (do not re-use old lids)
- A water bath canning set up, containing:
 - a large canning pot
 - a rack (or folded tea towel) to keep jars from touching the bottom of the canning pot
 - tongs

Ingredients:

- 4 lb pickling cucumbers
- 4 cups cider vinegar
- 4 cups water
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup pickling salt
- 3 tbsp pickling spices
- 5 bay leaves
- 2 ½ tsp mustard seeds
- 5 heads fresh dill (or 5 tsp dill seed)
- 5 garlic cloves

Process:

1. Start water bath boiling in a large canning pot. Once hot, set the 5 jars into the bath and fill each with the hot water. Leave jars in simmering bath until you need them.
2. Place snap lids into a small saucepan and simmer at medium heat.
3. Cut cucumbers lengthwise into ¼ inch slices.
4. Combine vinegar, water, sugar and salt in a large stainless steel saucepan.
5. Tie pickling spices in a cheesecloth, creating a spice bag; add to vinegar mix and simmer for 15 minutes.
6. Remove jars with tongs from boiling water and line up on the table.
7. In each jar, place 1 bay leaf, 1 garlic clove, ½ tsp mustard seed and 1 head of fresh dill.
8. Pack the cucumber slices into the jars as tightly as possible (this way, they won't float above the vinegar solution). Leave about ¾ inch between the top of the cucumbers and the top of the jar (called "headspace".)
9. Add the hot pickling liquid to cover the cucumbers to within ½ inch of the top rim. Using a non-metallic utensil, remove any air bubbles you notice.
10. Wipe the rim of the jar with a clean cloth to remove stickiness.
11. Remove snap lids one by one with tongs from the pot, and centre them on the tops of the jars. Put the screw band on and tighten just until resistance is met - "fingertip tight."
12. Place jars into the now cooled canning pot as you fill them. Cover the canner and return to a boil. Process (boil) the jars for 10 minutes.
13. When 10 minutes has passed, turn off the element, let boiling subside, and remove each jar with tongs or a jar lifter, careful to not tilt each jar. Cool for 24 hours. Don't retighten loosened lids. You should hear the lids make a popping noise one by one at this time!
14. After 24 hours, remove screw bands, dry them, and put them loosely back on the jars or leave them off.
15. Store the jars in a cool, dark place.



Preserving the Harvest Info Series *Wolfville Farmers' Market*

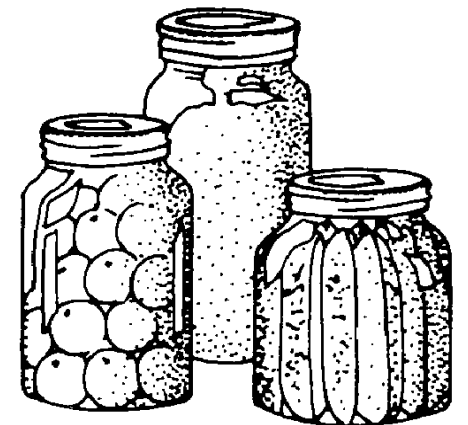
Pickling Perfection!

Pickling is the art of transforming summer's best, but fleeting, delicacies into the crunchiest part of a winter meal. Pickle making uses the power of simple products – salt, water, and vinegar – to create environments that prevent spoilage, while making them taste even better (according to some) than they already do.

There are two kinds of pickling:

Fermented pickles -Cucumbers (or other vegetables) are allowed to sit in salt water (aka: a "brine") for some time (several days up to several weeks). This acidic environment allows 'good' bacteria to breed and their byproduct, lactic acid, prevents the growth of undesirable bacteria such as the botulism toxins. People rave about the complex, pickly flavours that come out through fermentation, and the many health benefits to eating fermented vegetables.

Fresh-pack Pickles are made faster, and produce delicious pickles – though some argue they are less tasty than fermented pickles. Pickle types such as Mustard Pickles, Sweet gherkins, and relish are all made using this method. These pickles rely on vinegar for much of their preservation and flavour. In order to keep these pickles safely for months, proper canning techniques need to be employed.



Fermenting How-Do

Start by finding a **container** to ferment them in. A **ceramic crock** is best; it's made of safe, inert material (stoneware), has a wide top opening, and a dinner plate tends to fit perfectly into the upper opening. Food-grade plastic buckets and glass jars work well, too, but plastic containers that *aren't* food grade and any metal containers *do not* work. Be sure to find a **flat lid that fits inside** of the mouth of the container, that is *not* made of metal or plastic. The lid serves to hold the vegetables under the brine, thus keeping them protected from air-borne moulds and bacteria.

To keep the plate, and therefore the fermenting pickles, under the brine, weigh it down with two or three sealed quart jars filled with water (or another suitable heavy thing that can safely get wet). Cover the container opening with a clean towel to prevent contamination from insects while the vegetables are fermenting.

Tips & Troubleshooting in fermenting pickles ¹

- To determine **when cucumbers have fully fermented**, tap the container; if bubbles rise to the surface the pickles are still fermenting. Or, cut a cucumber in half; a consistent colour indicates that it's fully fermented, while rings or white patches indicate incomplete fermentation.
- Keep your crock or jar at a **consistent temperature**, and around 21-24 °C.
- Use **soft water** for fermented pickle-making. To soften hard water: Boil water in a stainless steel saucepan for 15 minutes. Cover and let stand for 24 hours. Skim off the skum that will probably have formed on top of the water. Ladle the water into another container without disturbing the sediment that will have collected at the bottom. Alternately, you can buy distilled water.
- If pickles are soft or slippery, you may have used **too weak a salt solution**, or left the pickles in **too warm a place**.
- Cloudy water indicates the use of table salt, which contains iodine. Use **pickling salt or kosher salt** next time!
- Hollow pickles can result if the **cucumbers are too large** and the brine cannot penetrate to the centre.

More than just cucumbers!

Why not try your hand at pickling radishes, beets, green tomatoes, onions, nasturtium pods, eggs, hot peppers, carrots, garlic, zucchini or summer squash...

Home canned products are nutritious, economical, and make lovely gifts.

Search your community, the bookstore, and reputable websites for a range of canning recipies.

1. Bernadin Guide to Home Preserving, p 66.

A Recipe for Fermented Dill Pickles

(from Wild Fermentation by Sandor Ellix-Katz, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2003.)

This recipe is for easy-to-make fermented pickles that will be kept in the refrigerator (for about 6 months), not in jars on the shelf. If you would like to keep your fermented pickles on the shelf, recipes often recommend fermenting in a water, salt and vinegar solution. Find a recipe, and follow it!

3-4 pounds cucumbers (as fresh as possible and unwaxed)

6 tbsp salt (coarse sea salt or pickling salt)

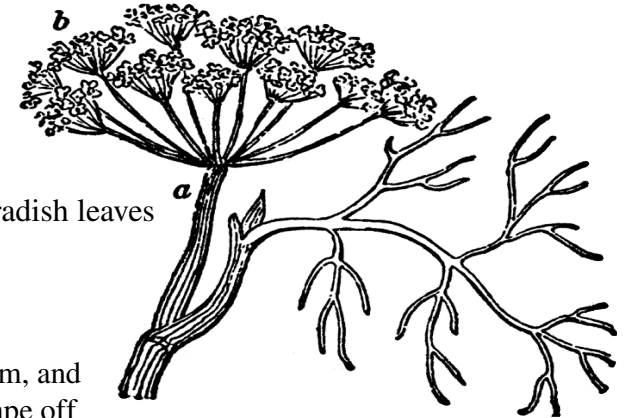
3-4 heads fresh flowering dill

(or, 3-4 tbsp dried dill seeds or leaves)

2-3 heads garlic, peeled

1 pinch black peppercorns

1 handful fresh grape, cherry, oak and/or horseradish leaves



Process:

1. Rinse cucumbers, taking care not to bruise them, and making sure their blossoms are removed. Scrape off any remains at the blossom end. If you're using cucumbers that aren't fresh off the vine that day, soak them for a couple of hours in very cold water to freshen them.
2. Dissolve sea salt in 2 litres of water to create brine solution. Stir until salt is thoroughly dissolved.
3. Clean the crock or jars, then place at the bottom of it dill, garlic, fresh grape leaves, and a pinch of black peppercorns.
4. Place cucumbers into the container.
5. Pour brine over the cucumbers, place the clean plate (or heavy glass) over them. Weigh down the plate or other lid until covered with brine. If necessary, add more brine mixed at a ratio of just under 1 tbsp of salt to each cup of water.
6. Cover the crock with a cloth to keep out dust and insects. Store it in a cool place.
7. Check the crock every day. Skim any mould from the surface, but don't worry if you can't get it all. IF there's mould, be sure to check that the plate or lid fits and is properly weighed down.
8. Taste the pickles after a few days, enjoy the changing flavour as they continue to ferment. Continue to check the crock every day.
9. After 1-4 weeks (depending on the temperature), the pickles will be fully sour. Move them to the fridge to slow fermentation.