

HOME ECONOMICS NO. 8 — REVISED 1972

Making Cucumber Pickles\*

Pickle making involves a lot of time and skill. And making sweet pickles may be quite expensive because of the sugar required. Unless you raise your own cucumbers and use many pickles, it may be more practical to buy than to make them.

There are four general classes of cucumber pickles: brined dills, fresh-pack dills, long process sweet, and quick process sweet or sour.

TIPS ON INGREDIENTS

Today's bottled vinegars contain from 4 to 6 percent acetic acid. Some labels state 40 to 60 grain, which means the same thing. The vinegar of 20 to 25 years ago contained only about 3 percent acetic acid, so pickles made from old recipes may be very sour. Choose the vinegar you prefer—white, dark, malt, or cider.

Use pure granulated bag salt for these recipes. You may use table salts for some pickling, but the materials in them that prevent caking can cause cloudiness or darkening. Avoid table salt in making fermented pickles and for curing sweet pickles.

TO INSURE SUCCESS WITH PICKLES

- 1. Use good quality freshly picked cucumbers.
2. Wash cucumbers thoroughly to remove soil. Rub stem and blossom ends gently with a vegetable brush, as spoilage bacteria often lodge in these areas.
3. Be sure that every bit of cucumber is covered with brine. Undesirable bacteria may grow on the surface of an exposed cucumber and cause the entire lot to spoil.
4. Allow up to 14 days for preliminary curing and gradual increase of the sugar and vinegar concentration for sweet and chunk pickles.
5. Cure pickles at cool temperatures to avoid spoilage.
6. Process all pickled products in boiling water, both to insure a sound seal and to destroy spoilage organisms.
7. Use kettles of unchipped enamelware, aluminum, or stainless steel for heating acid liquids. Galvanized utensils are not recommended. Do not use copper utensils; stainless steel utensils with copper bottoms are suitable.

Four pickle recipes are presented here as representative of their types.

BRINED DILL PICKLES

Yield: 9 to 10 quarts

Cucumbers, 3 to 6 inches in length ----- 20 pounds

- Whole mixed pickling spice ----- 1/4 cup
Dill plant, fresh or dried ----- 2 to 3 bunches
Vinegar ----- 2 1/2 cups
Salt, pure granulated ----- 1 1/4 cups
Water ----- 2 1/2 gallons

Cover cucumbers with cold water. Wash them thoroughly using a vegetable brush. Handle gently to avoid bruising and remove any blossoms. Drain on rack or wipe dry.

Place half the pickle spices and a layer of dill in a 5-gallon crock or jar. Fill the crock with cucumbers to within 3 to 4 inches of the top. Place a layer of dill and remaining spices over the cucumbers. (Garlic may be added, if desired.) Thoroughly mix vinegar, salt, and water and pour over cucumbers.

Cover with a heavy china or glass plate or lid that fits inside the crock. Use a weight — such as a glass jar filled with water — to hold the plate down and keep cucumbers under brine. Cover loosely with a clean cloth.

Keep pickles at room temperature and remove scum daily. Scum may start forming in 3 to 5 days. Do not stir pickles but be sure they are completely covered with brine. If necessary, make additional brine using original proportions specified in recipe.

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

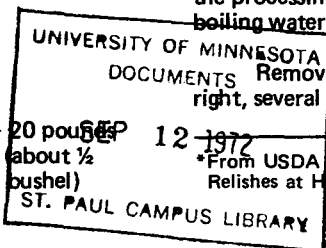
The original brine is usually cloudy due to yeast development during the fermentation period. If this cloudiness is objectionable, you can use fresh brine to cover pickles when packing them into jars. To make fresh brine, use 1/2 cup salt and 4 cups vinegar to 1 gallon water. The fermentation brine is generally preferred for its added flavor; strain it before boiling.

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

Process in boiling water for 15 minutes (start counting the processing time as soon as you place hot jars in the actively boiling water).

Remove jars and complete seals if necessary. Set jars upright, several inches apart, on a wire rack to cool.

\*From USDA Home and Garden Bulletin 92, "Making Pickles and Relishes at Home".



## FRESH-PACK DILL PICKLES

Yield: 7 quarts

Cucumbers, 3 to 5 inches in length	17-18 pounds, packed 7-10 per quart jar
5-percent brine (¾ cup pure granulated salt per gallon water)	about 2 gallons
Vinegar	6 cups (1½ quarts)
Salt, pure granulated	¾ cup
Sugar	¼ cup
Water	9 cups (2¼ quarts)
Whole mixed pickling spice	2 tablespoons
Whole mustard seed	2 teaspoons per quart jar
Garlic, if desired	1 or 2 cloves per quart jar
Dill plant, fresh or dried	3 heads per quart jar
Dill seed	1 tablespoon per quart jar

Wash cucumbers thoroughly using a vegetable brush; drain. Cover with the 5-percent brine (¾ cup salt per gallon water). Let set overnight and then drain.

Combine vinegar, salt, sugar, water, and mixed pickling spices that are tied in a clean thin white cloth; heat to boiling. Pack cucumbers into clean hot quart jars. Add mustard seed, dill plant or seed, and garlic to each jar. Cover with boiling liquid to within ½ inch of jar top. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water for 20 minutes (start counting the processing time as soon as hot jars are placed in the actively boiling water).

Remove jars and complete seals if necessary. Set jars upright, several inches apart, on a wire rack to cool.

## SWEET GHERKINS

Yield: 7 to 8 pints

Cucumbers, 1½ to 3 inches in length	5 quarts (about 7 pounds)
Salt, pure granulated	½ cup
Sugar	8 cups (2 quarts)
Vinegar	6 cups (1½ quarts)
Turmeric	¾ teaspoon
Celery seed	2 teaspoons
Whole mixed pickling spice	2 teaspoons
Stick cinnamon	8 1-inch pieces
Fennel (if desired)	½ teaspoon
Vanilla (if desired)	2 teaspoons

### **First Day**

**Morning.** Wash cucumbers thoroughly; scrub with vegetable brush; stem ends may be left on if desired. Drain cucumbers; place in large container and cover with boiling water.

**Afternoon (6 to 8 hours later).** Drain; cover with fresh boiling water.

### **Second Day**

**Morning.** Drain; cover with fresh boiling water.

**Afternoon.** Drain; add salt; cover with fresh boiling water.

### **Third Day**

**Morning.** Drain; prick cucumbers in several places with table fork. Make sirup of 3 cups of the sugar and 3 cups of the vinegar; add turmeric and spices. Heat to boiling and pour over cucumbers. (Cucumbers will be partially covered at this point.)

**Afternoon.** Drain sirup into pan; add 2 cups of the sugar and 2 cups of the vinegar to sirup. Heat to boiling and pour over pickles.

### **Fourth Day**

**Morning.** Drain sirup into pan; add 2 cups of the sugar and 1 cup of the vinegar to sirup. Heat to boiling and pour over pickles.

**Afternoon.** Drain sirup into pan; add remaining 1 cup sugar and the vanilla to sirup; heat to boiling. Pack pickles into clean hot pint jars and cover with boiling sirup to ½ inch of top of jar. Adjust jar lids.

Process for 5 minutes in boiling water (start to count processing time as soon as water returns to boiling). Remove jars and complete seals if necessary. Set jars upright, several inches apart, on a wire rack to cool.

## SHORT PROCESS PICKLES--SWEET OR SOUR

Pickles made by the short process will not be as crisp as those made by a long process. They may be brined for a few hours or overnight or crisped in ice water. The following recipe is for a short process bread and butter pickle.

Yield: 7 pints

Cucumbers, medium size, sliced	4 quarts (about 6 pounds)
Onions, 12 to 15 small white, sliced	1½ cups (about 1 pound)
Garlic cloves	2 large
Salt	1/3 cup
Ice, crushed or cubes	2 quarts (2 trays)
Sugar	4½ cups
Turmeric	1½ teaspoons
Celery seed	1½ teaspoons
Mustard seed	2 tablespoons
Vinegar, white	3 cups

Note: Sugar may be reduced to 4 cups if a less sweet pickle is desired.

Wash cucumbers thoroughly using a vegetable brush; drain on rack. Slice unpeeled cucumbers into 1/8-inch to 1/4-inch slices; discard ends. Add onions and garlic.

Add salt and mix thoroughly. Cover with crushed ice or ice cubes and let stand 3 hours. Drain thoroughly and remove garlic cloves.

Combine sugar, spices, and vinegar; heat just to boiling. Add drained cucumber and onion slices and heat 5 minutes.

Pack hot pickles loosely into clean hot pint jars to ½ inch of top. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water for 5 minutes (start counting the processing time as soon as water in canner returns to boiling). Remove jars and complete seals if necessary. Set jars upright to cool.