



Making Pickles

Do you want to set your home grown produce all year round?
Why not try pickling or preserving them?

Pickles

Not all fermented foods are pickled and not all pickles are fermented foods! Pickled foods have been preserved in an acidic medium such as vinegar. This process is referred to as 'quick pickling'. These foods do not offer the probiotic benefits and enzymes that naturally fermented foods provide. Some mass produced commercial versions of fermented foods are manufactured with high heat and under pressure. These industrial processes are designed to sterilise vegetables and destroy their microorganisms rather than cultivating them. In fermented no vinegar is added. The fruit or vegetable is cured in salt-and-water brine and natural bacteria which are already present in the food. Once starting the process, the bacteria present produce lactic acid which preserves the foods and adds natural probiotics which aid in digestion and support general health.

As explained above, pickles usually refer to veggies in vinegar but the best way of making them is to use brine! You need to make it pretty salty for the veggies to develop that special crispness and you will be hooked! Once you have let it sit for a few weeks, test the small cucumbers first as the large ones may take a little longer to ferment (up to 4 weeks).

You can try olives, mushrooms and even citrus fruits like lemons and oranges. For flavouring add dill, peppercorns and garlic. For extra crunch add a handful of fresh grape, cherry, oak and or horseradish leaves.

American terms:

If you follow a recipe that refers to half-sours then they are talking about 3.5% brine, which roughly equates to 2 tablespoons worth of salt in 4 cups of water. For sour salty pickles, then add 4 tablespoons of salt in 4 cups of water.

Olives need somewhere between 5-10% to cure properly and remove the sap-like taste. This can take up to 6 months and changing the water monthly will shorten the process.

Quick Pickled Mushrooms in oil recipe. Try simmering 2 cups of mushrooms in 200g sugar, 220ml of soy sauce and 200ml sherry vinegar for half an hour then bottle.

Try to experiment with different strengths and see what you prefer.

In winter you need to use less salt to allow for the microbial growth, than you do in summer.



Picked cucumbers recipe

References: Steps: Sandor Katz' book, 'Wild Fermentation' describes how to make it and there are some excellent sources online.

The most famous example of picked veggies is spiced kimchi from Korea!

Making Your Own Vinegar:

Are you taking a teaspoon of Apple cider vinegar a day for your health. If it is difficult to swallow you should try making your own!

Utensils: You don't need expensive equipment to get started. Most things will be in your kitchen. You will need a 1L wide necked jar, wooden or plastic spoon, plastic or stainless steel strainer, glass measuring jug and cloth squares for covering jars with elastic bands. Preserving jars work well as you can get the 'mother' out easily at the end.

Culture: Acetobacter

Time period: 8-10 weeks.

Additional info: The ideal recipe is to add your Acetobacter mother with 1/3 cider vinegar from the old batch, to 1/3 new 5-6% alcohol (wine or cider etc) plus 1/3 unchlorinated water.

Do you have wine that is not to your taste? Don't throw it out, make your own vinegar instead! The best the wine you use, the better the vinegar. So you can keep left over cider or use white or red wine that has oxidised to produce something to bottle and give away to friends. This is one product that will keep for a long time and the flavour will mature with age and soften. You need to have an acid level of at least 2% for the Acetobacter mother to convert the alcohol to acetic acid.

The mother looks like a cellulose / jelly and sits on the top of the liquid and needs oxygen in a warm dark place to work. The mother can sink over time if it splits or if you move the bottle around too much. (Don't worry about this as a new one will form and keep converting the alcohol for you.) It is a good idea to keep it in a large glass or ceramic vessel (like Kombucha) with a cover with holes in it for oxygen to get through. Don't use iron, aluminium or copper vessels only glass or ceramics will do. You don't want any other chemical reactions going on in your brew and you don't want to poison anyone either!

References / Steps: Sandor Katz' book, 'Wild Fermentation' describes how to make different types of pickles and there are some excellent sources online.

Preserves

They can be added to vegetables in a crock or preserving jars to enhance their flavour and produce your own sauerkraut. The bacteria involved are usually *Streptococcus thermophilus* and thermophilic lactobacilli (*Lactobacillus helveticus*, *Lact. delbrueckii* subsp. *lactis/bulgaricus* and *Lact. fermentum*). Fermented vegetables have excellent health benefits for digestion and immune boosting functions which has been reported by the scientific community. The best vegetables to use are cabbage, brussels sprouts and root vegetables like carrots and ginger and even sweet potato.

Instructions on how to make sauerkraut or kimchi

Happy pickling!

