

# PICKYourOwn.org

Where you can find a pick-your-own farm near you!

Click on the printer icon that looks like this:  (at the top left, to the right of "save a copy") to print!  
See [www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm](http://www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm) for many other canning directions and recipes

## Making Homemade Pickles

### Using the "Quick process" method

Making and canning your own pickles, gherkins, kosher dills, bread and butter, sweet pickles, etc. is one of the easiest things you can do with produce! Here's how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. It is much faster than the old method your grandmother used with tons of pickling salt and de-scumming the brine! Ugh! This method is so easy, ANYONE can do this! It's a great thing to do with your kids! I'm experimenting with the various techniques, such as soaking the cucumbers overnight in lime solution first, using "pickle crisp" etc. I'll revise this page as I taste the results in the weeks to come!

### Types of Pickles

- **Fresh-pack (or quick process) pickles** are cured for several hours in a vinegar solution or are immediately combined with hot vinegar, spices, and seasonings. Examples include dills, bread-and-butter pickles and pickled beets. Quick Process is what these instructions show. Other types are:
- **Fermented pickles** are vegetables soaked in a brine solution for 4 to 6 weeks. During this time, lactic acid bacteria, naturally present on the surface of vegetables, grows. Other microbes are inhibited by salt. The color of the vegetables changes from bright green to olive/yellow-green, and the white interior becomes translucent. Examples include dill pickles and sauerkraut.
- **Refrigerated dills** are cucumbers fermented for 1 week in a salt brine and then stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 months.
- **Fruit pickles** are whole or sliced fruit simmered in a spicy, sweet-sour syrup. Examples include spiced peaches and crabapples.
- **Relishes** are made from chopped fruits or vegetables that are cooked to a desired consistency in a spicy vinegar solution. Examples include corn relish and horseradish.

## Ingredients and Equipment

- **Cucumbers** - fresh, crisp - not wilted, soft or overripe!
- **Quick Process Pickling mix** - It usually goes for about \$2.00 to \$4.00 per packet. A packet will make about a dozen pint jars.
- **Clear vinegar** - about 4 cups of 5% vinegar, apple cider vinegar works well. Store brand is about \$1.25 for a 64 oz bottle.
- **Jar grabber** (to pick up the hot jars)
- **Lid lifter** (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at WalMart)
- **Jar funnel** (\$2 at Walmart)
- **1 large pot**; teflon lined, glass or ceramic.
- **Large spoons and ladles**
- **1 Canner** (a huge pot with a rack, to hold the jars and prevent them from braking; used to "process (sterilize) the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart (seasonal item)). Note: we sell many sizes and types of canners for all types of stoves and needs - see [canning supplies](#))
- **Pint canning jars** (Ball or Kerr jars can be found at Publix, Kroger and WalMart - about \$8 per dozen jars including the lids and rings). Be sure to get wide mouth jars to fit the pickles in! Pint size works best!
- **Lids** - thin, flat, round metal lids with a gum binder that seals them against the top of the jar. They may only be used once.
- **Rings** - metal bands that secure the lids to the jars. They may be reused many times.

## Process - How to Make Pickles

### Step 1 - Selecting the cucumbers

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality cucumbers!

At right is a of picture cucumbers from my garden - they are SO easy to grow. But be sure to grow the varieties that are labeled "pickling cucumbers" - they will be much more crisp!

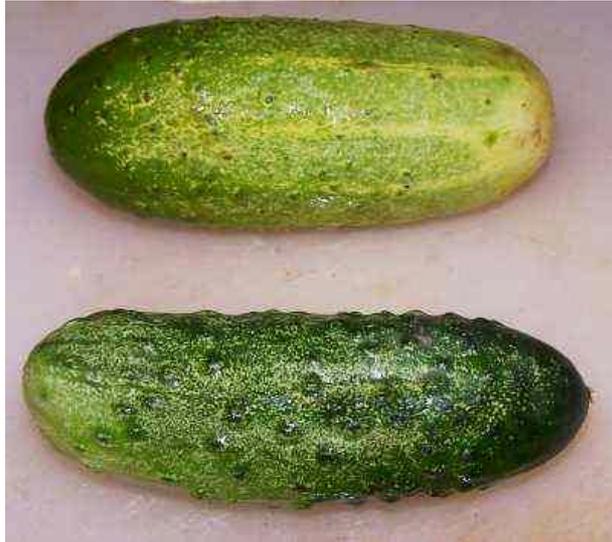


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The picture at right shows a good cucumber for pickling (bottom) and a bad one (top). The good one is dark green, firm, and not bloated. It has lots of warts!

The bad one is overripe, it has yellow or white areas in the skin, and the warts are almost all gone. If you cut it open, you will see developed seeds. You don't want seeds!

Overripe cucumbers make mushy pickles.



### **Step 2 - How many cucumbers?**

It takes about 3 or 4 cucumbers to fill a pint jar. Each cucumber is about 4 - 5 inches long and you will cut off the ends so they will fit with 1/4 inch to spare..

### **Step 3 - Wash and cut the vegetables!**

I'm sure you can figure out how to wash the fruit in plain cold water.

You will need to cut the ends off (about 1/4 inch) and then slice them lengthwise if you like spears. You can also leave them whole or cut them cross-wise for bread-and-butter pickles.



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#### Step 4 - Get the jars and lids sterilizing

The dishwasher is fine for the jars. I get that going while I'm preparing everything else, so it's done by the time I'm ready to fill the jars. Be sure to let it go through the rinse cycle to get rid of any soap!

Lids: put the lids into a pan of boiling water for at least several minutes. Note: everything gets sterilized in the water bath (step 7) anyway, so this just helps to ensure there is no spoilage later!)

**Need lids, rings and replacement jars?**

[Get them all here, delivered direct to your home, at the best prices on the internet!](#)



#### Step 5 - Mix the vinegar with the pickling mix and bring to a near boil

OK, you can make your own pickling mix from spices, salt, dill, etc.; but it is MUCH more time-consuming, complicated, and prone to problems. This method produces pickles which are just as crisp - as long as you pick very firm cucumbers. It also helps to add 2 grape leaves to every jar (I kid you not, they have something in them that makes the pickles crunchier).

The stores (Wal-Mart, Publix, Kroger, etc.) sell several varieties of mixes - Kosher dill, bread-and-butter and sweet pickles are the most commonly seen. And be sure to get them by July - they tend not to re-order them when they sell out. Mrs. Wages "quick process refrigerator pickle mixes" are the easiest, as they do not even require a water bath canner (but must be stored in the fridge!). The

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others require canning as shown in these instructions, and may be stored on the shelf.

### **Pickle mixes**

To interject a crass commercial here - hey, I've got to pay for the website somehow :) I have found the best (crispest, best tasting) pickles from a mix are with the "Mrs. Wages Polish Dill Refrigerator Pickle Mix" They REALLY are good AND you don't need a canner - you store them in your fridge right after making them. They're ready to eat in 24 hours! Our affiliate sells the mixes (and at really good prices, too)



Whether you want dills or sweet pickles; canning them or straight into the refrigerator; there is a mix for every taste and need here! [Get everything you need to make pickles: mixes, salt, brine, etc. here!](#)



### **Step 6 - Heat the pickle mix**

Bring the mix and vinegar to a near-boil - just simmering! The directions on the packet will tell you how much vinegar to add, it's usually about 4 cups

Be sure to use a NON-metal pot - or a coated metal (teflon, silverstone, enamel, etc.) without breaks in the coating. the metal reacts with the vinegar and makes the pickle solution turn cloudy.

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### Step 7 - Fill the jars with cucumbers and put the lid and rings on

Pack the cucumbers, whole or slices in and pour the simmering pickle mix liquid over them. Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, seat the lid and hand-tighten the ring around them.

### Step 8 - Boil the jars in the canner

#### Put them

in the canner and keep them covered with at least 1 inch of water. Keep the water boiling. Boil them for 10 minutes (or as directed by the instructions in the pickle mix, or with your canner). [Remember to adjust for altitudes and larger jars!](#) Note: some mixes, such as the Ball Kosher Dill mix call for only boiling for 5 minutes - I'll let you know how that works out! generally, the longer you process the jars, the more mushy (less crisp) the pickles will be.



### Step 9 - Done

Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight) You can then remove the rings if you like.

When can you start eating the pickles? Well, it takes some time for the seasonings to be absorbed into the pickles. That's at least 24 hours, but for best flavor wait a week! Ah... the wait...



## Other Equipment:

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs  
to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter  
- to remove lids from the  
pot  
of boiling water (sterilizing  
)
3. Lid  
- disposable - you may only  
use them once
4. Ring  
- holds the lids on the jar  
until after  
the jars cool - then you  
don't need them
5. Canning jar funnel  
- to fill the jars

