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

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See www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm for many other canning directions and recipes

Making Homemade Low-Salt Pickles

Yield: 6 pint jars

Making and canning your own **low-salt** pickles, gherkins, kosher dills, bread and butter, sweet pickles, etc. is one of the easiest things you can do with your cucumbers! If you are on a restricted salt diet, this is the recipe for you. 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've added [free labels for your jars here](#), in a Word format! Just download, edit, and print in label paper.

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 (below on this page) 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 marinated for 1 day to 1 week in a salt and spice brine (in the fridge) and then stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. No canning is required! [See this page for refrigerated dill pickle directions!](#)
- **Fruit pickles** are whole or sliced fruit simmered in a spicy, sweet-sour syrup. Examples include spiced peaches and crabapples. [See this page for directions to make spiced peaches!](#)
- **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. [See this page for cucumber pickle relish directions!](#)

Ingredients

- **Cucumbers** - 4 or 5 lbs of fresh, crisp pickling cucumbers - not wilted, soft or overripe!
- **Sugar** - 2 cups - (Splenda if you are diabetic)
- **Pickling salt** - 2 tablespoons - (available at most grocery stores)
- **2 tbsp whole mixed "pickling spice"** (again, it's available from Kroger, Publix, local "big box" stores and large grocery stores). This is NOT a Mrs Wages or Ball packet, it is natural pickling spices, just pre-mixed.
- **7 heads of fresh dill** (1 head per pint jar) or, if you can't get fresh dill (it's SO easy to grow, plant it next to your cucumbers) just use 2 tbsp dill seed per pint jar.
- **Cheesecloth or a spice bag**, or even a small piece of a old, but clean cotton shirt - to hold the spices
- **Clear vinegar** - 6 cups of 5% vinegar, apple cider vinegar works well. Store brand is about \$1.25 for a 64 oz bottle.



Equipment

- **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 Target, other big box stores, and often grocery stores; and available online - see this page)
- **Large spoons and ladles**
- **Jar funnel** (\$2 at Target, other big box stores, and often grocery stores; and available online - see this page)
- **1 large pot**; teflon lined, glass or ceramic.
- **1 Canner** (a huge pot to sterilize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at big box stores and grocery stores.). 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 grocery stores, like Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores, even online - 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.
- **[See this page for pickling supplies, equipment, books, crocks and additives.](#)** If you want to [make your own seasoning see this page!](#)

Directions - How to Make Reduced-Salt 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!

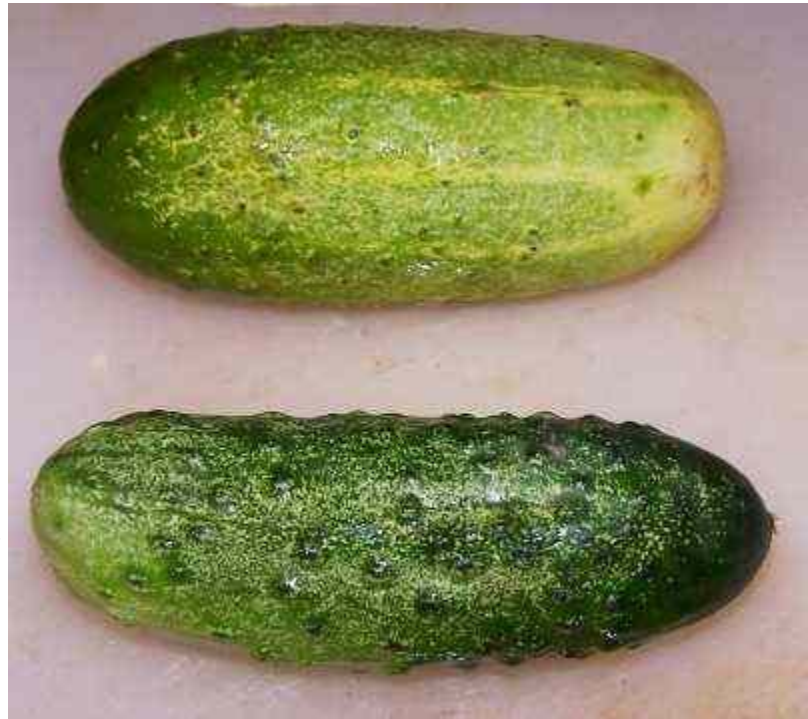
The picture at right shows a good cucumber for pickling (bottom) and a bad one (top). The good one is dark green, firm, and not bloated. It has lots of warts!

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!

For cucumber pickles, use cucumbers intended for pickling that are no more than 2 inches in diameter. Start with crisp raw vegetable varieties to get crisp pickled vegetables.

The most important factor in getting crisp pickled vegetables is to start with fresh, just-picked vegetables.

Overripe cucumbers make mushy pickles. Vegetables become soft as their pectin structure changes due to microbial activity, excess heat or improper handling. As each day passes, vegetables lose crispness. Once a vegetable is soft it cannot be made firm again.



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 ¼-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 ¼-inch, the blossom harbors microbes that can cause softening.) 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.

Set them aside for use in step 8.



Step 4 - Get the jars and lids sterilizing

The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sterilize" cycle. I get that going while I'm preparing everything else, so it's done by the time I'm ready to fill the jars. If you don't have a dishwasher, submerge the jars in a large pot (the canner itself) of water and bring it to a boil.

Be sure to let it go through the rinse cycle to get rid of any soap!



Get the canner heating up

Fill the canner about 1/2 full of water and start it heating (with the lid on).

Start the water for the lids

Put the lids into the small pot 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!



Step 5 - Put the spices in the spice bag

Tie the **2 tbsp whole mixed "pickling spice"** in the spice bag or a 6 inch by 6 inch piece of cheesecloth or a cotton shirt.

Again, it's available from Kroger, Publix, local "big box" stores and large grocery stores. This is NOT a Mrs Wages or Ball packet, it is natural pickling spices, just pre-mixed.



Step 6 - Mix the sugar, salt and vinegar in a pot and bring to a near boil

Combine the

- **Sugar** - 2 cups - (Splenda if you are diabetic)
- **Pickling salt** - 2 tablespoons - (available at most grocery stores)
- **Clear vinegar** - 6 cups of 5% vinegar, apple cider vinegar works well. Store brand is about \$1.25 for a 64 oz bottle

in a pot.

Pickle Mixes



To interject a crass commercial here - hey, my wife says 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) - BUT they are NOT low salt!

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!](#) or here:

Step 7 - Heat the pickle mix

Add the spice bag! Bring the mix to a boil!

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.



Step 8 - Fill the jars with cucumbers and put the lid and rings on

Pack the raw cucumbers from step 3, whole or slices in and pour the simmering pickle mix liquid over them. Fill them to within ¼-inch of the top, seat the lid and hand-tighten the ring around them.



Step 9 - 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 15 minutes



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. Once the jars are cool, you can check that they are sealed verifying that the lid has been sucked down. Just press in the center, gently, with your finger. If it pops up and down (often making a popping sound), it is not sealed. If you put the jar in the refrigerator right away, you can still use it. Some people replace the lid and reprocess the jar, then that's a bit iffy. If you heat the contents back up, re-jar them (with a new lid) and the full time in the canner, it's usually ok.

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 2 weeks! Ah... the wait...



Pickle Making Problems?

See this page for a more complete set of frequently asked pickling questions and answers:
<http://www.pickyourown.org/picklesFAQs.htm>

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



Summary - Cost of Making Homemade Pickles - makes 6 pint jars, 16 oz each*

Item	Quantity	Cost in 2009	Source	Subtotal
Cucumbers	4 lbs - about 3 or 4 per pint jar)	free from the garden, or \$3.00 at a PYO	Pick your own	\$3.00
Canning jars (pint size, wide mouth), includes lids and rings	6 pint jars	\$7.00/dozen	Grocery stores (Publix, Kroger, Safeway, etc.)	\$3.50
Vinegar	6 cups	\$1.50	Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores	\$1.50
Sugar	2 cups	\$4.00 per 5 lb bag	Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores	\$1.00
Dill	6 heads	free or \$2.00	Your garden or grocery store	\$2.00
Pickle spice	2 tablespoons	\$3.00 per package	Grocery stores (Publix, Kroger, Safeway, etc.)	\$0.50
Total			\$11.00 total or maximum of \$1.83 per jar INCLUDING the jars - which you can reuse!	

* - This assumes you already have the pots, pans, ladles, and reusable equipment. Note that you can reuse the jars! Many products are sold in jars that will take the lids and rings for canning. For example, For example, Classico Spaghetti sauce is in quart sized jars that work with Ball and Kerr lids and rings. Note that the Classico's manufacturer does not recommend reuse of their jars: [see what they have to say on this page:](#)