


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 for many other canning directions and recipes

How to Make Homemade Natural Dill Pickles

Using the "Fresh-Pack, natural, homemade mix" method

Yield: 7 to 9 pint jars

Making and canning your own dill pickles the old-fashioned way, with all natural ingredients has never been easier!! Here's how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. This method is so easy, ANYONE can do this! It's a great thing to do with your kids!

Note: in Step 4 the cucumbers need to sit in brine for 12 hours, so plan ahead (I do that overnight)

[Click here for the page of frequently asked questions \(with answers\) about making pickles.](#)

Background:

- **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.

Ingredients and Equipment

- Cucumbers - fresh, crisp - not wilted, soft or overripe! You'll need about 8 lbs of 3 to 5 inch pickling cucumbers
- 2 gals water
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups canning or pickling salt (most large grocery stores sell this, as does Wal-Mart .
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts vinegar (5 percent) (5%, apple cider vinegar works well. Store brand is about \$1.25 for a 64 oz bottle.)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar (if you are diabetic, use Splenda, or you can omit sugar altogether)
- 2 quarts water
- 2 tbsp whole mixed pickling spice (again, it's available from Kroger, Publix Wal-Mart and large grocery stores)
- about 3 tbsp whole mustard seed (2 tsp to 1 tsp per pint jar)
- about 14 heads of fresh dill (3 heads to $1\frac{1}{2}$ heads 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 $4\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp dill seed (1 tbsp to $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp per pint jar)
- 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, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores)
- 1 large pots; teflon lined, glass or ceramic.
- Large spoons and ladles
- 1 Water Bath Canner (a huge pot to sterilize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart
- Pint canning jars (Ball or Kerr jars can be found at grocery stores - 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.

Directions - How to Make Pickles

Step 1 - Selecting the cucumbers



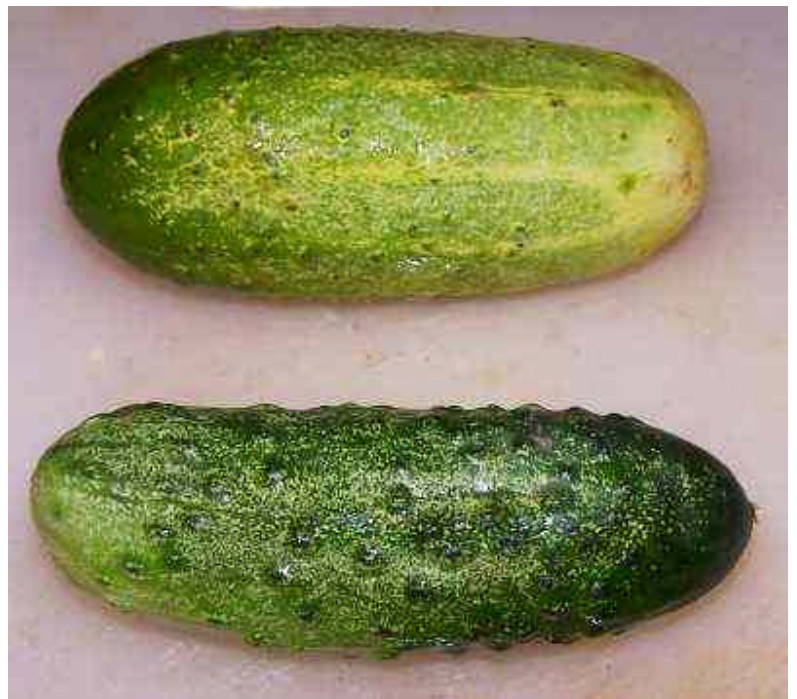
It's fun and easy to grow or pick your own and you can obviously get better quality cucumbers!

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!

Overripe cucumbers make mushy pickles.



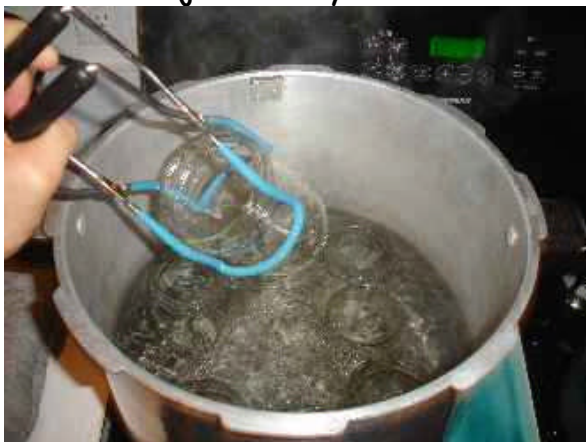
Note: in Step 4 the cucumbers need to sit in brine for 12 hours, so plan ahead (I do that overnight)

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 - 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 4 - Brining the cucumbers

Dissolve $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salt in 2 gals cool water. Pour this over cucumbers in a large plastic bowl or teflon pot and let stand 12 hours, then drain and discard the liquid.

Note about 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)

Step 5 - 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 a 1/16-inch slice off the blossom end and discard, but you can leave the stem end and $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch of the stem attached, or slice it off, as you prefer. 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 7.

Step 6 - Heat the pickle mix

Combine the 1½ qts vinegar, ½ cup salt, ¼ cup sugar (if you are diabetic, use Splenda) and 2 quarts water. Put the 2 tbsp whole mixed pickling spice into a piece of cheesecloth or other clean cloth (Note: a baby's mesh teether, meant to hold an ice cube is made of plastic, is reusable and perfect for this).



Bring the mix to a near-boil - just simmering!

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 7 - Fill the jars with dill, mustard seed and cucumbers and put the lid and rings on



Put the dill and mustard seed in the bottom of each jar:

- Mustard seed: 2 tsp to 1 tsp per pint jar
- Fresh dill: 3 heads to 1½ heads per pint jar OR 1 tbsp to 1½ tsp of dill seed per pint jar

Pack the cucumbers from step 5, 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 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.



Recommended process time for **Quick Fresh-Pack Dill Pickles** in a boiling-water canner.

		Process Time at Altitudes of		
Style of Pack	Jar Size	0 - 1,000 ft	1,001 - 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Raw	Pints	10 min	15	20
	Quarts	15	20	25

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

<http://www.PickYourOwn.org/.htm>

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 12
pint jars, 16 oz each***

Item	Quantity	Cost in 2007	Source	Subtotal
Cucumbers	30-36 (about 3 or 4 per pint jar)	free from the garden, or \$3.00 cents at a PYO	Pick your own	\$3.00
Canning jars (pint size, wide mouth), includes lids and rings	12 jars	\$8.00/dozen	WalMart, BigLots, Publix, Kroger	\$5.00
Vinegar	4 cups	\$0.99	WalMart, Publix, Kroger	\$0.99
Sugar	1/4 cup	\$0.25	WalMart, Publix, Kroger	\$0.25
Pickling salt	1¼ cups	\$2.00	WalMart, Publix, Kroger	\$2.00
Dill (fresh or seed)	7 heads	I grow it, otherwise, I'd use the seed from the grocery: \$2.00	WalMart, Publix, Kroger	\$2.00
Pickle spices	2 Tablespoons	\$2.00 per package, sp about \$0.50	WalMart, BigLots, Publix, Kroger	\$0.50
Total			\$14.00 total or about	\$1.50 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:](#)

How to make other pickles - recipes and instructions:

- [Refrigerator pickles \(no canning required\)](#)
- [Cucumber pickle relish](#)
- [Pickled beets](#)
- [Pickled green beans](#)
- [Pickled dilled okra](#)