

Pickles will keep in the fridge for several months, but will begin to lose some of their nice crunch after several weeks.

About grape Leaves & crispness...

Crispness comes from a vegetable's natural pectin. Grape leaves contain tannin, which inhibits the pectinase enzymes that make pickles soften.

However, since this enzyme is located at the blossom end of the cucumber, trimming your cucumbers before pickling them should have the same effect.

Starting with the smallest, freshest cucumbers and giving them an ice-water bath before pickling will help with crispness, too.

Did you know?

Dill has long been known for its soothing properties, especially for the digestive tract. Even its name, from the Norse dilla, means "to soothe or lull." It is said to stimulate the appetite, and to relieve flatulence and settle the stomach.

References

Full Moon Feast: Food and the Hunger for Connection, by Jessica Prentice. Chelsea Green Publishing.

Nourishing Traditions, by Sally Fallon with Mary G. Enig, Ph.D. New Trends Publishing, Inc.

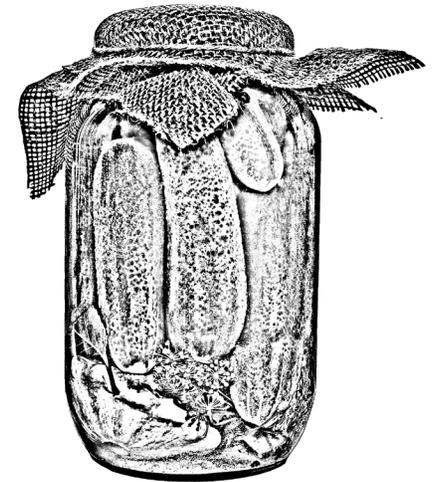
Wild Fermentation: The Flavor, Nutrition, and Craft of Live-Culture Foods, by Sandor Katz. Chelsea Green Publishing.

About City Market, Onion River Co-op

City Market, Onion River Co-op is a consumer cooperative with over 11,500 Members, selling wholesome food and other products while building a vibrant, empowered community and a healthier world, all in a sustainable manner. Located in downtown Burlington, Vermont, City Market provides a large selection of local, organic and conventional foods, and thousands of Vermont-made products.

Visit City Market, Onion River Co-op online at www.citymarket.coop or call 802-861-9700.

Pickling Cucumbers



Pickling cucumbers in brine is a traditional method for preserving summer's cucumber harvest. Called lacto-fermentation, it relies on bacteria on the surface of the cucumbers to convert sugars to lactic acid, enhancing the vegetables' digestibility and increasing their vitamin levels - as well as preserving them. These tangy pickles are the real deal - sour, crunchy, and full of live cultures and enzymes that enhance our health.



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Start by deciding how strong you want to make your brine (“sour” or “half-sour”) and whether you want to use whey to speed the process along (“quick pickled cucumbers”). Then choose the quantity you will make and follow the instructions below.

Sour Pickles

This recipe is for sour, fairly salty pickles.

For 1 gallon:
4 pounds pickling cucumbers
6 Tbs. sea salt
2 quarts water

For 2 quarts:
2 pounds pickling cucumbers
3 Tbs. sea salt
1 quart water

For 1 quart:
1 pound pickling cucumbers
1.5 Tbs. sea salt
2 cups water

Half-Sour Pickles

These pickles don't have quite as much salt.

For 1 gallon:
4 pounds pickling cucumbers
4 Tbs. sea salt
2 quarts water

For 2 quarts:
2 pounds pickling cucumbers
2 Tbs. sea salt
1 quart water

For 1 quart:
1 pound pickling cucumbers
1 Tbs. sea salt
2 cups water

Quick Pickled Cucumbers

These fairly salty pickles use whey to jump-start the lacto-fermentation.

For 2 quarts:
2 pounds pickling cucumbers
2 Tbs. sea salt
2 cups water
1/2 cup whey

For 1 quart:
1 pound pickling cucumbers
1 Tbs. sea salt
1 cup water
1/4 cup whey

Supplies

Gallon-size ceramic crock or food-grade plastic bucket
Plate that fits inside crock or bucket
Jar filled with water or other weight
-or-
Wide-mouth quart-size mason jar(s)
Jar(s) filled with water or other weight

Dishcloth to cover

Additional Ingredients

Choose from among these ingredients (or your own inventions) to add flavor to your pickles. Ingredients are given for 1-quart size quantity:

3 large garlic cloves, peeled
2 fresh chilies
1 Tbs. fresh flowering dill, dill leaves, or dill seeds
1 tsp. - 1 Tbs. mustard seeds
1 tsp. - 1 Tbs. coriander seeds
pinch black peppercorns
2 grape, horseradish, or oak leaves (if available)

Process

Rinse cucumbers, taking care to not bruise them. If you're using cucumbers that aren't fresh off the vine that day, soak them for a couple of hours in very cold water to freshen them.

If cucumbers are large, trim ends and slice them into rounds; or, quarter them lengthwise.

Dissolve sea salt in water to create a brine solution. Stir until salt is thoroughly dissolved. (It's best to do this in a separate jar or mixing bowl). If you are using whey, add it to the brine.

Place fresh grape leaves at the bottom of the crock or quart-size jar. Add any additional ingredients (garlic, chilies, dill, etc.). Layer the cucumbers into the jars, arranging as necessary to get them to fit. Leave at least 1 inch free space at the top of the jar.

Pour brine over the cucumbers, then weigh them down with a jar filled with water (on top of a clean plate if you are using a crock or gallon-size bucket) to keep them submerged. If you are making “quick pickled cucumbers” with whey, you may just tightly screw on the lid to the jar.

Cover the jar or crock with a cloth and store it in a cool place, away from the sun.

Check the jar or crock every day, rinsing the weight occasionally. This will help ensure the fermentation produces a pleasant flavor.

Taste the pickles after 2 days. They should be pleasantly sour, but no longer salty. Move “quick pickled cucumbers” with whey to the fridge. For “sour” and “half-sours,” keep checking until you like the level of sourness (1-4 weeks), then move to the fridge to slow down fermentation.