

# Peculiar peccadillos of preserving pickles

'Tis the season of preserving. Many of you have been at it for weeks, but there is still lots to go.

Bushels of tomatoes and peppers are rapidly becoming salsa, tomato sauce, roasted peppers and so much more. A whole variety of fruits are being cooked up into fruit syrups for many ice cream sundaes and pancakes to come. Cucumbers are miraculously becoming pickles and herbs are being dried or frozen for the winter.

Well, okay, this is actually happening at some houses— it is not happening at mine— there seems to be a lack of time problem. I can hardly get dinner on the table let alone preserve anything. But there's always the hope that someone else will and maybe they'll drop a little something at my doorstep!

There are many forms of preserving foods. Drying can be used on fresh herbs, or a bit different method of drying could turn your fresh fruits into delicious fruit leather! Roasting works for peppers. Pickling works for fruits and vegetables, and then of course there is a myriad of jams, jellies, salsas, sauces, coulis and more.

Pickling dates back to Greek and Roman times. Large pickling vases were used to hold vinegars, oils and brines in which onions, lemons, plums, peaches, herbs, roots and flowers all became very similar to the pickles we make today.

However, during the pickling process, sometimes things go wrong— here is a bit of troubleshooting for you in case you run into trouble along the way:

Zucchini tastes bitter? Some vegetables, like zucchini, will taste bitter if they are not brined or salted before pickling.

Pickles not keeping well? Then they may

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not have been brined long enough so that too much moisture came out of them and diluted the vinegar. Or, the vinegar may not have been up to strength and contained less than 5% acetic acid. (Avoid boiling any vinegar solution for a long time because the acetic acid will lose its ability to keep stored pickles safe.)

Pickles gone cloudy? If the pickles are brined for too short a period of time, they can make the vinegar turn cloudy.

Pickles are soft? The pickles have most likely been left too long before eating.

Pickles gone mouldy? Air pockets will be trapped in jars if the vegetables or fruits are packed too tightly, and the vinegar has not been able to completely cover them. Tapping the jars once they are filled will help remove any pockets that do form.

Pickles are shrunken and dried out? If the jars are not sealed correctly, the vinegar will evaporate, causing the contents of the jars to shrink and dry out.

One last note: make sure the lids of the jars are non-corrosive, or rust will form and contaminate the contents of the jar.

Have fun and keep cooking!

(Lori and Gerry can be reached at [whatscookin@independentfreepress.com](mailto:whatscookin@independentfreepress.com))



## Harvard Beets

(also known as  
Beets with Orange and Ginger)

### Ingredients

- 1 bunch fresh beets, greens trimmed and beets washed
- 1 orange
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- 2 heaping tbsp brown sugar
- 1-2 tbsp cornstarch

### Method

Cover beets with cold water in a large pot. Bring to a boil and simmer one and a half hours or until when poked with a fork, the beets are tender.

Allow the beets to cool enough that you are able to handle them. Drain and reserve liquid.

Peel skin from beets, then dice beets and set aside.

To four cups of the beet broth, add the zest of one orange and the juice of one orange. Add ginger and brown sugar and bring to a simmer.

Mix cornstarch with a 1/4 cup cold water. Add enough of the cornstarch liquid to the beet broth to thicken slightly.

Add the beets to the liquid. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

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