

Proper Ps and Qs of pickling pickles

This week we've got a recipe for dill pickles and next week you'll get the recipe for bread and butter pickles. Gerry has been making them for years, but specifically with the grandsons for the last four years—quite satisfying she says! Personally, I'm just glad to receive a box of homemade pickles that someone else made!

Before you get started on your pickle-making adventure, first a few words about the jars you use and the sterilizing process.

Mason jars with lids and screw rings are the best choice for canning. The lids must be new (not re-used). You can use other recycled jars—with the lids and screw rings, but you will most likely experience more spoilage and breakage, as they will not seal as well as the mason jars do and the glass itself is not as thick. You need new lids, as the seal really only works properly once, but the screw rings can be reused as long as they are not rusty.

To sterilize your jars, you can either do them in the dishwasher (no soap please!) or you can boil them on the stovetop.

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



The lids and rings need to be done on the stovetop. All the items need to be boiled for several minutes before they are sterile.

Once the hot jam/pickles/chutney has been placed in the jar, only screw the lid on until it is finger-tip tight. You don't want to screw them on too hard and break the seal.

Then the sealed jars go back into a fresh pot of boiling water. The water needs to cover the tops of the jars by about an inch at least. They should boil in here for 10 minutes.

When you remove them, be very careful not to touch the jar or bump them together as they are very susceptible to breakage at this time.

Allow them to cool on the counter overnight before touching

and moving them.

While these jars are cooling, you may hear hissing or popping noises. That is perfectly fine. It is the sound of air escaping from the jars and the lid being sucked so a proper seal is formed.

Keep in mind that the water bath method is not appropriate for all preserved foods. Generally, this method works for foods that have a fairly high acid content. But low acid foods need to be processed in a canner.

Once your food has been jarred and sealed, there are a couple of ways to tell if the food has gone bad:

- If the lid of the jar has not been sucked down, but rather is bulging or flexing, that is not a good sign.

- If there is any leakage once the food has been stored—once again this is not a good sign.

- And, if there is any change in colour, texture, signs of mold or a smell, then the food should be discarded.

Have fun and keep cooking!

(Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com)

Dill Pickles

Ingredients

- 10 cups water
- 4 cups white vinegar
- 3/4 cup pickling salt
- Approx sixty 3-4" cucumbers
- Fresh dill weed flowers

Method

1. In a large pot, mix together water, vinegar and salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and continue to simmer 3-4 minutes. Stir to ensure salt is fully dissolved.

2. Scrub cucumbers.

3. Sterilize jars.

4. Place one piece of dill in the bottom of each jar. Fill with cucumbers. Put one piece of dill on top and cover cucumbers with hot brine. Put lid on immediately and tighten to finger-tip tightness.

5. Place jars of pickles in a large pot of boiling water (so that the water covers the tops of the jars) and boil for 10 minutes. Then remove from the water (very carefully so as not to bump them) and allow them to cool over night on the counter.

Cook's notes:

1. For garlic dill pickles, place 1 clove of garlic (peeled) in the bottom of each jar.

2. Let pickles mature for six weeks before eating.



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