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How to make Old-Fashioned Barrel Pickles

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. **But this is NOT a recipe for a beginners. Scrupulous attention to cleanliness and diligence in each step is required.**

Background: Types of Pickles

- **Fermented pickles (the recipe on this page)** are vegetables soaked in a brine solution for 4 to 6 weeks. Old-fashioned barrel pickles were cured using the fermentation method. Basically, yeast produces acid to preserve the cucumbers, along with a lot of added salt (brine). 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.

Other types are:

- **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. these are substantially easier to make than fermented pickles. [See this page, if you'd rather make Quick Process pickles..](#)
- **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!](#)

[Click here for Causes and Possible Solutions for Problems with Fermented Pickles](#)

Ingredients

Use the following quantities **for each gallon** capacity of your fermentation container

- Cucumbers - fresh, crisp - not wilted, soft or overripe!
- 4 lbs of 4-inch pickling cucumbers
- 2 tbsp dill seed or 4 to 5 heads fresh or dry dill weed (it is SO easy to grow, plant it next to your cucumbers)
- 1/2 cup salt (canning or pickling salt - NOT table salt)
- 1/4 cup vinegar (5 percent)
- 8 cups water and one or more of the following ingredients:
- 2 cloves garlic (optional)
- 2 dried red peppers (optional)
- 2 tsp whole mixed pickling spices (optional)
- a fermentation crock. For more information about what is a suitable fermentation container, see "[Suitable Containers, Covers, and Weights for Fermenting Food](#)". and [Click here to find out where to get fermentation crocks](#).

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 sanitize them. (\$2 at Target, other big box stores, and often grocery stores; and available online - see this page)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at Target, other big box stores, and often grocery stores; and available online - see this page)
- 1 large pots; teflon lined, glass or ceramic.
- Large spoons and ladles
- 1 Water Bath Canner (a huge pot to sanitize 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 \$9 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](#).

Pickling Equipment Notes:

The basic equipment used for pickling is similar to other types of canning. However, there are some differences:

- Utensils made of zinc, iron, brass, copper, or galvanized metal should not be used. The metal may react with acids or salts and cause undesirable color and taste changes in the pickles or make pickles unfit to eat. Likewise, enamelware with cracks or chips should not be used.
- For fermenting and brining, a crock or stone jar, an unchipped enamel-lined pan, a glass jar, a bowl, or a casserole can be used for small quantities. Kegs and barrels (made of hardwood and either enamel, glass, or paraffin lined) can be used for larger quantities. The container used must be fitted with a flat dish to fit

inside and cover the food in the brine. A weight is necessary to hold the dish down and to keep the foods below the surface of the brine. A glass jar filled with water and closed with a cap makes a good weight.

Directions - How to Make Natural Fermented Old Fashioned Dill Pickles

Step 1 - Selecting the cucumbers

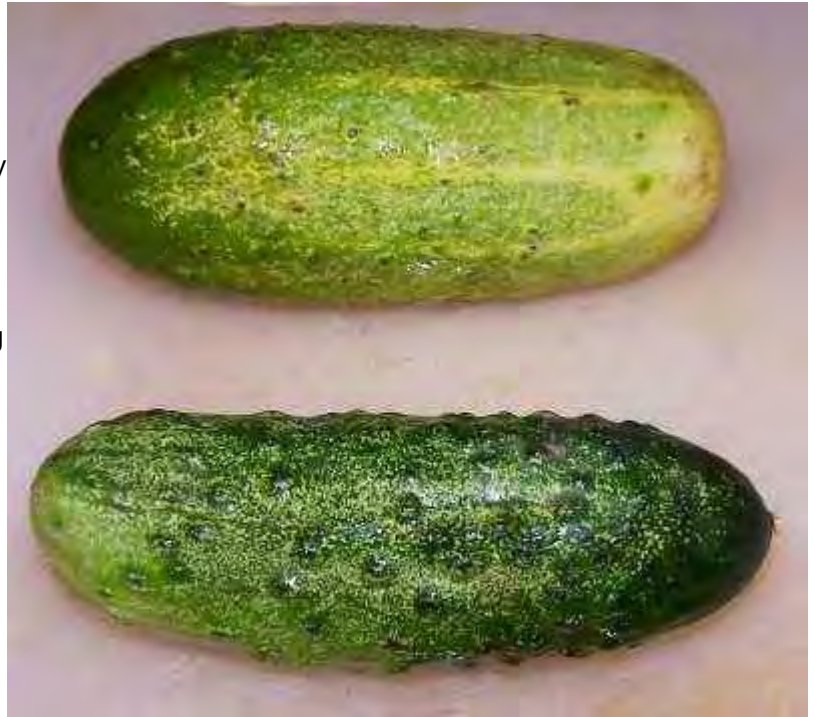
It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality cucumbers!

At right is a 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.



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 cucumbers!

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 must leave the stem end and ¼-inch of the stem attached.

You may then pickle the cucumber whole; or you may choose to slice it in half lengthwise to make halves; and if you want, again to make spears (quarters).

Set them aside for use in step 6.



Step 4 - Fill the crock

Place half of dill and spices on bottom of a clean, suitable container. For more information on containers see "Suitable Containers, Covers, and Weights for Fermenting Food," below

Add cucumbers, remaining dill, and spices.

Step 5 - Add the vinegar and salt

Dissolve salt in vinegar and water and pour over cucumbers. Add suitable cover and weight.

Step 6 - Store / ferment

Store where temperature is between 70°F and 75°F for about 3 to 4 weeks while fermenting. Temperatures of 55° to 65°F are acceptable, but the fermentation will take 5 to 6 weeks. Avoid temperatures above 80°F, or pickles will become too soft during fermentation. Fermenting pickles cure slowly. Check the container several times a week and promptly remove surface scum or mold. **Caution: If the pickles become soft, slimy, or develop a disagreeable odor, discard them.**

Step 7 - Long term storage

Whether you store them in the fridge or can them, you need to do the following 4 steps first:

1. Pour the brine into a pan,
2. heat slowly to a boil, and simmer 5 minutes.
3. Filter brine through paper coffee filters to reduce cloudiness, if desired.
4. Fill jar with pickles and hot brine, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.



Next, follow either Option 1 OR Option2:

Option 1

Canning fully fermented pickles is simple, safe way to store them.

Get the jars and lids sanitizing
The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sanitize" 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.



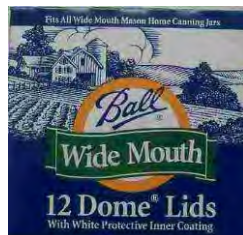
Be sure to let it go through the rinse cycle to get rid of any soap!

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 sanitized in the water bath (step 7) anyway, so this just helps to ensure there is no spoilage later!)



Adjust lids and process as recommended in Table below, or use the low-temperature pasteurization treatment described below.



Recommended process time for Dill Pickles in a boiling-water canner.



Process Time at Altitudes of

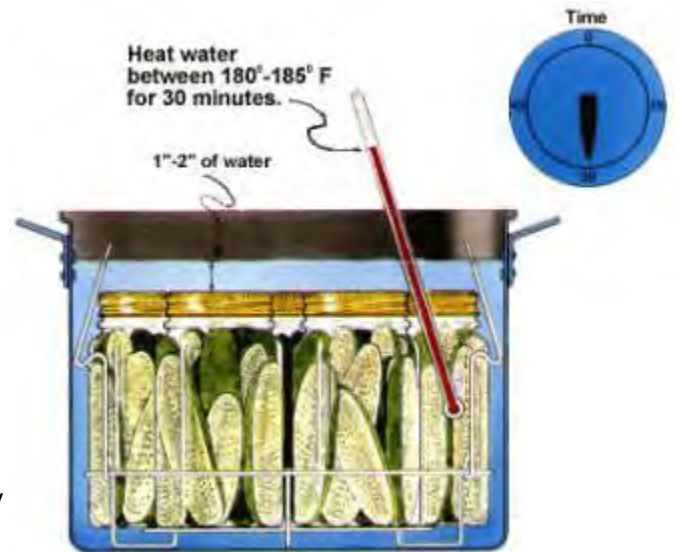
Style of Pack Jar Size 0 - 1,000 ft 1,001 - 6,000 ft Above 6,000 ft

| | | | | |
|-----|--------|---------------|----|----|
| Raw | Pints | 10 min | 15 | 20 |
| | Quarts | 15 | 20 | 25 |

Option 2 - Low-Temperature Pasteurization Treatment

The following treatment results in a better product texture but must be carefully managed to avoid possible spoilage. Fully fermented pickles may be stored in the original container for about 4 to 6 months, provided they are refrigerated and surface scum and molds are removed regularly.

- Place jars in a canner filled half way with warm (120° to 140°F) water.
- Then, add hot water to a level 1 inch above jars.
- Heat the water enough to maintain 180° to 185° F water temperature for 30 minutes. Check with a candy or jelly thermometer to be certain that the water temperature is at least 180°F during the entire 30 minutes. Temperatures higher than 185°F may cause unnecessary softening of pickles.



This document was adapted from the "Complete Guide to Home Canning," Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, USDA, revised 1994. Reviewed June 2006.

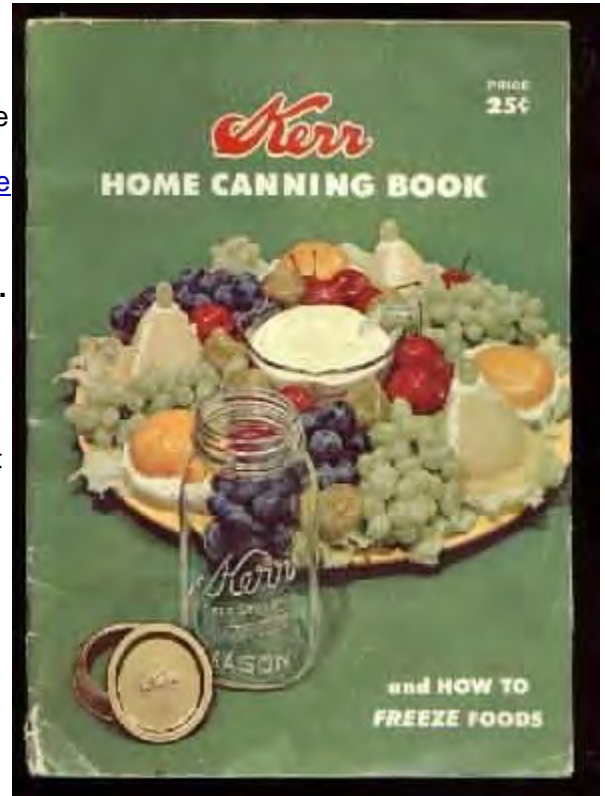
Suitable Containers, Covers and Weights for Fermenting Food

A 1-gallon container is needed for each 5 pounds of fresh vegetables. Therefore, a 5-gallon stone crock is of ideal size for fermenting about 25 pounds of fresh cabbage or cucumbers. Food-grade plastic and glass containers are excellent substitutes for stone crocks. Other 1- to 3-gallon non-food-grade plastic containers may be used if lined inside with a clean food-grade plastic bag. [Click here to find out more about fermentation crocks](#). There is also a good book about making old-fashioned sauerkraut.

Caution: Be certain that foods contact only food-grade plastics. Do not use garbage bags or trash liners. Fermenting sauerkraut in quart and half-gallon Mason jars is an acceptable practice, but may result in more spoilage losses.

Cabbage and cucumbers must be kept 1 to 2 inches under brine while fermenting. After adding prepared vegetables and brine, insert a suitably sized dinner plate or glass pie plate inside the fermentation container. The plate must be slightly smaller than the container opening, yet large enough to cover most of the shredded cabbage or cucumbers. To keep the plate under the brine, weight it down with 2 to 3 sealed quart jars filled with water. Covering the container opening with a clean, heavy bath towel helps to prevent contamination from insects and molds while the vegetables are fermenting. Fine quality fermented vegetables are also obtained when the plate is weighted down with a very large clean, plastic bag filled with 3 quarts of water containing 4-1/2 tablespoons of salt. Be sure to seal the plastic bag. Freezer bags sold for packaging turkeys are suitable for use with 5-gallon containers.

The fermentation container, plate, and jars must be washed in hot sudsy water, and rinsed well with very hot water before use.



Causes and Possible Solutions for Problems with Fermented Pickles

| Problem | Cause | Prevention |
|--|--|---|
| Soft or slippery pickles. (If spoilage is evident, do not eat.) | 1. Salt brine too weak during fermentation. | 1. Maintain salt concentration specified in recipe. |
| | 2. Cucumbers stored at too high a temperature during fermentation. | 2. Store fermenting cucumbers between 70° and 75°F. This is the optimum temperature for growth of the organisms necessary for fermentation. |
| | 3. Insufficient amount of brine. | 3. Keep cucumbers immersed in the brine. |
| | 4. Pickles not processed properly (to destroy microorganisms). | 4. Process pickles in canner after filling jars. |
| | 5. Moldy garlic or spices. | 5. Always use fresh spices. |
| | 6. Blossom ends not removed from cucumbers. | 6. Slice at least 1/16th inch off blossom end of cucumbers and discard. |
| Strong, bitter taste | 1. Spices cooked too long in vinegar, or too many spices used. | 1. Follow directions for amount of spices to use and the boiling time. |
| | 2. Vinegar too strong. | 2. Use vinegar of the proper |

| | | |
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| | | strength (5% acidity). |
| | 3. Dry weather. | 3. No prevention. Bitter taste is usually in the peel or skin of fruits and vegetables. |
| | 4. Using salt substitutes. | 4. Potassium chloride, the ingredient in most of these, causes bitterness. |
| Problem | Cause | Prevention |
| Hollow Pickles | 1. Cucumbers too large for brining. | 1. Use smaller cucumbers for brining. |
| | 2. Improper fermentation. | 2. Keep brine proper strength and the product well covered. Cure until fermentation is complete. |
| | 3. Long lapse of time between harvest and brining. | 3. Fermentation process should be started within 24 hours after harvesting cucumbers. |
| | 4. Growth defect of cucumber. | 4. None. During washing, hollow cucumbers usually float. Remove and use for relishes instead of fermented pickles. |
| Shriveled Pickles | 1. Placing cucumbers in too strong brine, too heavy syrup, or too strong | 1. Follow a reliable recipe. Use amounts of salt and sugar called for in a recipe, and vinegar that is 5% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | vinegar. | acidity. |
| | 2. Long lapse of time between harvest and brining. | 2. Brine (start fermentation) within 24 hours after harvesting cucumbers. |
| | 3. Overcooking or overprocessing. | 3. Follow a reliable recipe exactly. |
| | 4. Dry weather. | 4. No prevention. Bitter taste is usually in the peel or skin of fruits and vegetables. |
| | | |
| Scum on the brine surfaces while curing cucumbers. | 1. Wild yeasts and bacteria that feed on the acid thus reducing the concentration if allowed to accumulate. | 1. Remove scum as often as needed. |
| Dark or discolored pickles. (If brass, copper or zinc utensils and brining equipment were used, do not use pickles.) | 1. Minerals in hard water. | 1. Use soft water. |
| | 2. Ground spices used. | 2. Use whole spices. |
| | 3. Spices left in jars of pickles. | 3. Place spices loosely in cheesecloth bag so they can be removed before canning. |
| | 4. Brass, iron, copper or zinc utensils used. | 4. Use food-grade unchipped enamelware, glass, stainless |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | steel, or stoneware utensils. |
| | 5. Iodized salt used. | 5. Use canning or pickling salt. |
| Problem | Cause | Prevention |
| Spotted, dull, or faded color | 1. Cucumbers not well cured (brined). | 1. Use brine of proper concentration. Complete fermentation process. |
| | 2. Excessive exposure to light. | 2. Store processed jars in a dark, dry cool place. |
| | 3. Cucumber of poor quality. | 3. Use produce of optimum quality, and grown under proper conditions (weather, soil, etc.) |
| White sediment in jar. | 1. Bacteria cause this during fermentation. | 1. None. |
| | 2. Salt contains an anti-caking agent or other additives. | 2. Use canning or pickling salt. |

Pickle Making Problems?

Some questions are answered at the bottom of this page. [See this page for a more complete set of frequently asked pickling questions and answers](#)

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)

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 them all here, delivered direct to your home, at the best prices on the internet!](#) Get everything you need to make pickles: mixes, salt, brine, etc. here!



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



Home Canning Kits

This is the same type of standard canner that my grandmother used to make everything from applesauce to jams and jellies to tomato and spaghetti sauce.

This complete kit includes everything you need and lasts for years: the canner, jar rack, jar grabber tongs, lid lifting wand, a plastic funnel, labels, bubble freer, and the bible of canning, the Ball Blue Book.

It's much cheaper than buying the items separately. You'll never need anything else except jars & lids (and the jars are reusable)! There is also a simple kit with just the canner and rack, and a pressure canner, if you want to do vegetables (other than tomatoes). To see [more canners, of different styles, makes and prices, click here!](#)



Average Customer Review:

image:

<http://pickyourown.org/images/stars-5-0.gif>

image:

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Usually ships in 1-2 business days

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 | Grocery stores (Publix, Kroger, Safeway, etc.) and online here | \$5.00 |
| Vinegar | 4 cups | \$0.99 | Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores | \$0.99 |
| Sugar | 1/4 cup | \$0.25 | Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores | \$0.25 |
| Pickling salt | 1 1/4 cups | \$2.00 | Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores | \$2.00 |
| Dill (fresh or seed) | 7 heads | I grow it, otherwise, I'd use the seed from the grocery: \$2.00 | Safeway, Publix, Kroger, grocery stores | \$2.00 |
| Pickle spices | 2 Tablespoons | \$2.00 per package, sp about \$0.50 | Grocery stores (Publix, Kroger, Safeway, etc.) | \$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, 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](#)

Can't find the equipment? We ship to all 50 states! Use our [Feedback form!](#)