Add Spice, Color and Crunch To Meals With Top-Quality Pickles

especially the vinegar and salt.

Follow the directions in the recipe

for the size of pickle you have

chosen. And if you're using

cucumbers, choose a variety

raised for pickling. Also, don't use

waxed cucumbers - pickling liquid

NEWARK, Del. - When Peter Piper picked his famous peck, it was probably because he wanted to add spice, color and crunch to his meals and snacks. The punch in pickles comes from skillfully selecting and blending spices, sugar and vinegar with the vegetables and fruits so abundant this season.

Preparing these pungent goodies needn't put anyone in a pickle. According to University of Delaware extension home economist Claudia Holden, a highquality pickle begins with highquality ingredients. Fruits and vegetables must be firm and not overripe. Be sure to wash all produce thoroughly, and remove blossoms. Cucumber blossoms contain enzymes that may soften cucumbers during fermentation.

Holden says it's important to carefully follow recipes. Don't cut on any ingredients, down

Westminster Herb Gardener

· (Continued from Page B2) The number to call is 301-876-2154. If herbs are a special interest of yours, you might want to check out some of the herb resources, catalogs and gardens listed below.

Herb Resources, Catalogs & Gardens The National Herb Garden **U.S. National Arboretum** 3501 New York Ave., N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 475-4865 The Herb Society of America 2 Independence Court Concord, MA 01742

Box 134 Salisbury Center, NY 07865 \$6.00

1966 Herb Directory

Diane Lea Mathews

Alloway Gardens and Herb Farm 456 Mud College Road Littlestown, PA 17340 717-359-4548 or 4363 Woodland Books P.O. Box 1422 Provo, Utah 84603

The Sandy Mush Herb Nursery

Rt. 2, Surrett Cove Road

Leicester, NC 28748

won't be able to penetrate the skin. Use high-grade cider vinegar or white, distilled vinegar, says Holden. White Vinegar is best for pickling light-colored products such as cauliflower and pears. Vinegar acidity should be 5 percent. (Check the label for vinegar strength.)

The choice of salt is important too, since salt contributes to the characteristic flavor and texture of pickles, and lowers the acidity. Holden recommends pure, granulated salt, which may be sold as pickling or canning salt. Kosher salt is also fine to use. Although iodized salt can be used, additives may make the brine cloudy.

Salt-free pickle recipes are

available. However, no-salt pickles are perishable and must be refrigerated or frozen.

Hard water may interfere with the curing process in pickling and cause shriveling or discoloration. If soft water is unavailable, boil hard water for 15 minutes, then cover and set aside for 24 hours. When ready to use, remove any scum from the surface, then pour the water slowly from the container so that sediment is left on the bottom. Buying distilled water is simpler, but more expensive.

Select the proper equipment for heating pickling liquids, advises Holden. "Don't use utensils of copper, brass, iron or any galvanized material. They may

react with salts or acid to change the color or taste of your pickles.'

Holden recommends heat processing for all pickled products. Use a boiling water bath, with water at least 2 inches over the tops of the jars in the canner. Process pickles for at least 10 minutes. The recipe may specify a longer boiling period. Start timing after the jars have been placed in the canner and the water returns to

'Many fruits and vegetables other than cucumbers can be successfully pickled," Holden points out. "Try green beans, okra, cauliflower, beets, pears, peaches, watermelon, and combintions made into chutneys."

Catalog \$2.00 Companion Plants Route 6, Box 88 Athens, Ohio 45701 Catalog \$1.50 The Rosemary House 120 S. Market Street Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 Catalog \$1.25 Well Sweep Herb Farm 317 Mt. Bethel Rd. Port Murray, NJ 07865 Catalog \$1.00 Caprilands Herb Farm 534 Silver Street Coventry, CT 06238 Catalog for 1 Stamp Stillridge Herb Farm 10370 route 99 Woodstock, MD 21163

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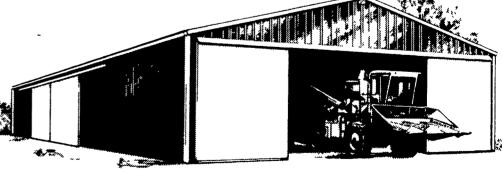
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