

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

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 high-quality pickle begins with high-quality 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 down on any ingredients,

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 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 a boil.

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

### Westminster Herb Gardener

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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  
1986 Herb Directory  
Diane Lea Mathews  
Box 134

Salisbury Center, NY 07865  
\$6.00

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, Surratt Cove Road  
Leicester, NC 28748  
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  
Catalog \$ .75

Southern Herbs  
P.O. Box 3722  
Winter Springs, FL 32708  
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