

Well Preserved

Relishes

As summer draws to a close gardens are still managing to produce an assortment of vegetables. When you have all the basic tomatoes, corn, and green beans preserved that your family will use for the year, you may be seeking some creative ways to use the leftovers in the garden along with the extra onions and peppers.

Various relishes and pickled vegetables make use of those end of the season treasures while providing a tasty accompaniment to meals and sandwiches. Their zesty flavors complement the blandness of a plain meat. Tossed into a macaroni salad or potato salad, relishes add color as well as flavor.

Relishes are made from chopped fruits and vegetables cooked to a desired consistency in a spicy vinegar solution. Some are sweet and some are sour. A survey of cookbooks reveals interesting names such as rummage relish, fall garden relish, and end of the garden relish.

Relishes are relatively easy to make because the vinegar used to flavor them increases the acidity of the vegetables allowing most of them to be processed in the boiling water bath. If you are not sure how you will like a particular recipe, try a test batch using half the recipe.

Select appropriate ingredients for success. Use fresh produce for best results. Ideally, fruits and vegetables will be pickled less than 24 hours before pickling. If it will be longer, the produce should be refrigerated until ready to use.

Ingredients for relishes



should be chopped into uniform pieces for an attractive appearance. Besides its contribution to flavor, salt acts as a preservative and adds crispness by drawing juices and sugar from the vegetables. Use canning or pickling salt which does not contain additives. Regular table salt or iodized salt may make the brine cloudy and darken pickles and relishes.

Use a high quality vinegar with a five percent acidity level. Mellow flavored cider vinegar is commonly used, but some recipes call for white vinegar or other flavored vinegar. White vinegar should be used when color is important.

Usually white cane or beet sugar is called for. Brown sugar, honey, and maple syrup are called for in recipes needing a more robust flavor. Only use a sugar substitute if you are using a recipe specifically designed for it. Sugar helps to firm the vegetables in a relish. Spices and herbs add to the flavor of the relishes. Most recipes call for whole fresh spices.

Powdered and salted forms of spices and herbs may cloud the pickling mixture. Some recipes add the spices and herbs directly to pickling mixtures, but

many recipes tell you to tie them in a spice bag, cheesecloth, or a coffee filter and hold them in the pickling solution to impart their flavor. Avoid using hard water because the minerals in hard water will react with the brine to affect the quality of the relish.

Avoid types of metals than may react with chemicals in the food or brine. Avoid utensils made of zinc, iron, brass, copper, galvanized metal or cracked enamelware. These can cause undesirable taste and color changes. Enamel that is not chipped, stainless steel, glassware, and food-grade plastic are appropriate utensils to use.

Use updated recipes developed since 1994 when USDA canning standards were revised. Because the ingredients going into a relish are low acid foods, this is not a time to use the little bit of extra corn or onion that is left over. Measure accurately so that you do not reduce the acidity level of the finished product. Relishes are canned by hot packing the brined ingredients. Work quickly to fill the jars with hot relish. Include adequate syrup. Allow adequate headspace—usually 1/2 inch.

Process the hot packed relish according to the recipe. It is not safe to open kettle can relishes without processing. Having the water in the canner at the boiling point when you add the filled hot jars saves time and results in a better seal with no siphoning.

The following corn relish recipe is tasty and colorful. It can be made using fresh or frozen corn.

Pickled Corn Relish

10 cups fresh whole kernel corn (16 to 20 medium-size ears), or six 10-ounce packages of frozen corn
2 1/2 cups diced sweet red peppers
2 1/2 cups diced sweet green peppers
1 1/2 cups chopped celery
1 1/4 cups diced onions
1 3/4 cups sugar
5 cups vinegar (5%)
2 1/2 tablespoons canning salt
2 1/2 teaspoons celery seed
2 1/2 teaspoons dry mustard
1 1/4 teaspoons turmeric
Yield: About 9 pints.

Procedure: Boil ears of corn 5 minutes. Dip in cold water. Cut whole kernels from cob or use six 10-ounce packages of frozen corn. Combine peppers, celery, onions, sugar, vinegar, salt, and celery seed in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Mix mustard and turmeric in 1/2 cup of the simmered mixture. Add this mixture and corn to the hot mixture. Simmer another 5 minutes. If desired, thicken mixture with a flour paste made of 1/4 cup flour blended in 1/4 cup cold water and stir frequently.

Fill jars with hot mixture, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process half-pints or pints for 15 minutes in a boiling-water canner at altitudes under 1,000 feet. (Process 20 minutes at altitudes between 1,001 and 6,000 feet, and 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.)

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays 10 a.m.-1 p.m., call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd., Rm.1, Lancaster, PA, 17601.

Take Control Of Your Money

WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension is offering a free workshop Taking Control of Your Money. It is offered Tuesday, Sept. 17, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in the Chester County Government Services Center, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester.

Learn the basics of creating and using a spending plan, looking for found money, and credit use. The information will help you and your family deal with the dilemmas and decisions regarding earning, spending, and saving money.

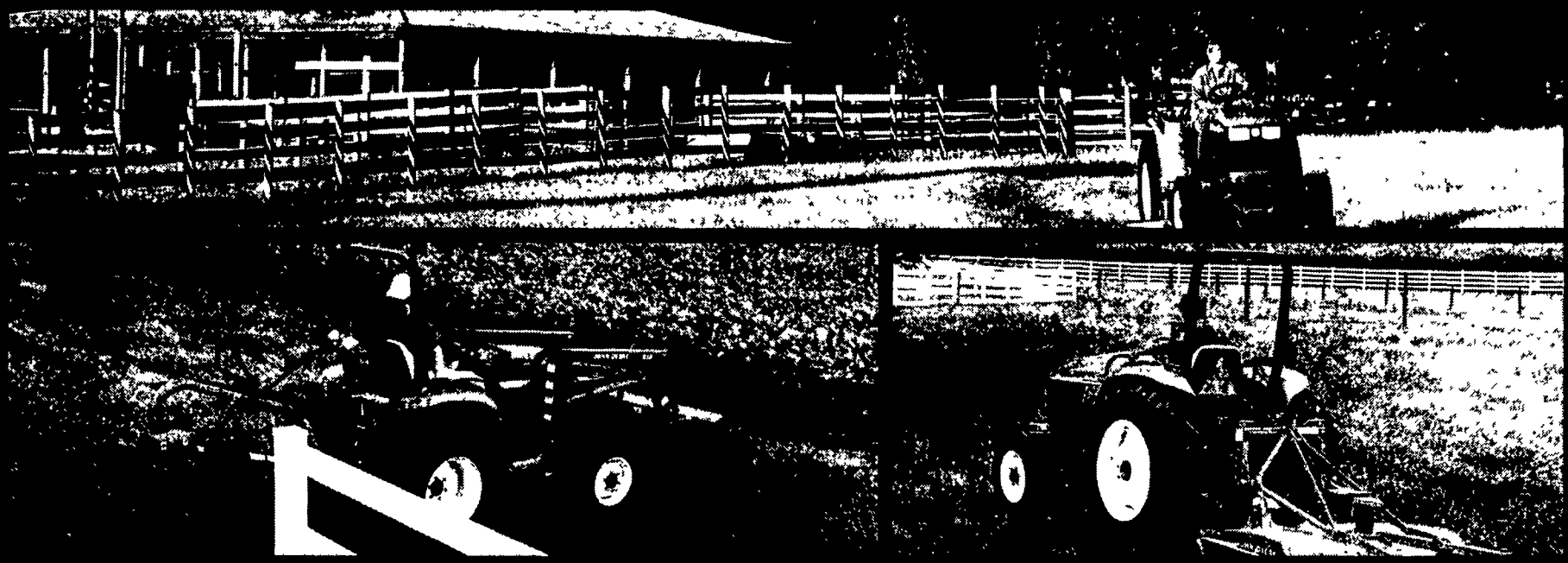
Financial success requires teamwork, so a family needs to talk together about money. Discussions concerning how to spend money, what the family's future needs are, when to use credit, and other issues are as necessary as organizing records themselves. To register or for more information call Penn State Cooperative Extension at (610) 396-3500 by Sept. 10.

Gardening Workshop

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — Penn State Master Gardeners offers the following workshop at the Bradford County Demonstration Garden, Fourth Street, Towanda.

• Putting the Garden to Rest — October 19, 9 a.m. Learn how to care for the vegetable, herb, shrub and flower gardens in the fall. Learn how to plant rye on those vegetable beds as a cover crop.

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