



RECIPE for health

AUGUST 2013

featured food:
CUCUMBERS

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

"In a pickle" is a curious phrase that means you are in a heap of trouble. While not exactly trouble, if you grow a garden, you know what it's like to have too much of a good thing. The four cucumber seedlings I planted in late May began rewarding me in mid-July with as many as a dozen cucumbers a day. Eaten fresh, I enjoyed their cool flavor and juicy crunchiness, but they were beginning to pile up. Making all those cucumbers into pickles was a good idea.

You can pickle just about anything but most times, the term "pickles" refers to slender spears or slices of cucumbers that have been brined. Cucumbers fit well into two groups:

- Pickling cucumbers are 4 to 6 inches long with tender skin covered with spiny warts. Leave the peel on for pickling. Peel them first if you want to use them in a salad.
- Slicing cucumbers are 6 to 10 inches long with smooth dark skin and prominent seeds that some people scoop out before using in salads. Slicers can be used for making refrigerator pickles if they are small and firm but they are not a good choice for heat-processed pickles.

For either type, look for cucumbers with firm texture and bright colors. Bigger is not better—cucumbers that are large in diameter or turning yellow were left on the vine too long and likely will be dry and filled with hard seeds.

The simplest pickles are made with sliced cucumbers and onions layered in a jar and covered with a brine of vinegar and water, sweetened to your liking. The vegetables need to sit in the brine for 3 hours before serving. This makes a refreshing side dish for just about any meal.

Refrigerator pickles don't keep long—just a few days. If you boil the pickling solution before pouring it over the washed and prepared vegetables, you can extend the refrigerator shelf life to a few weeks.

Sweet Pickles

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Makes 3 cups.

- 1 pound (four 6-inch) cucumbers, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 small) sliced onion
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon mustard seed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, divided
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice (or $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground allspice)
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric

Combine cucumbers, onions, cider vinegar, salt, mustard seed and 2 Tablespoons sugar in a sauce pan and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low and let cook for 10 minutes. Drain the mixture into a colander, discarding the liquid. Transfer the solids to a heatproof bowl or quart jar.

Combine 6 Tablespoons sugar, honey, celery seed, white vinegar, allspice, peppercorns and turmeric in sauce pan and bring to a boil. Pour hot mixture over the solids, pressing gently on cucumbers and onions to be sure all are covered by the brine; let container sit at room temperature until cool. Cover and refrigerate 36 to 48 hours before enjoying. Can be eaten after 24 hours, but best with longer pickling time.

Try **Sweet Pickles** for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on August 7.