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THE SOUTH'S BREAD AND BUTTER

Sweet pickles preserved in tradition

From watermelon rind to pig's feet, plenty of quirky pickles can be found below the Mason-Dixon, but there's nothing like the crunch and tang of a pickled cucumber to punch up a sandwich or midnight snack. The sweet pickle is a Southern staple,

a legacy from back in the day when sugar was used as a preservative in the region's sweltering climate. It's worth a trip to your farmers market to find just-picked Kirby cucumbers—the fresher the cuke, the better the pickle. For crisper pickles, slice cucumbers ¼-inch or thicker and choose pint jars instead of quart-size. (The smaller the jar, the shorter the processing time, and the more crunch you'll keep.) Don't be intimidated by the equipment needed for canning: a stock pot and cake rack are all you need for a canning kettle, and tongs can serve as jar lifters—just hold on tight! Stick to kosher, canning, or pickling salt to avoid cloudiness in the brine and discoloration of the vegetables. After processing jars in boiling water, keep them upside-down for about twelve hours while cooling for a strong seal. With proper canning, which halts bacteria growth and allows for safe food storage, pickles will keep unopened in your cupboard for months. For a quicker option, skip the water bath altogether and you'll have ready-to-go refrigerator pickles. —Lia Grabowski

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN BONGEK

TLP's Bread and Butter Pickles

Ingredients

15 Kirby or pickling cucumbers
1 small Vidalia onion
2 tablespoons kosher salt
2 cups white vinegar
1 cup apple cider vinegar

1½ cups sugar
¼ teaspoon turmeric
¾ teaspoon minced fresh ginger
½ teaspoon celery seed
1½ tablespoons mustard seed



1

SLICE VEGETABLES

Slice cucumbers to ¼-inch thickness or more, depending on preference. For larger pickles, slice on the bias. Thinly slice onion and add to cucumber.



2

TOSS AND RINSE

Toss slices in salt and let sit for 1 to 2 hours, then rinse quickly in cool water. (You don't want to wash off all the salt, as there won't be any added in the pickling liquid.) Drain well.



3

PREP PICKLING LIQUID

Combine vinegars, sugar, turmeric, ginger, celery seed, and mustard seed in large sauce pan. Bring to a simmer to dissolve sugar.



4

PLACE IN JARS

Pack cucumber slices into sterilized jars, leaving ½-inch of headspace at top of jar.



5

ADD LIQUID

Pour hot pickling liquid over cucumber slices, maintaining ½-inch of headspace. Tamp down to remove air.



6

CAN AND COOL

Screw lids on jars until finger tight, then process in simmering water for 15 minutes. Carefully remove from water bath, tighten jars, and place upside down on a heat-proof surface to cool.