

Cucumber Basics

BUYING CUCUMBERS FOR FRESH EATING

- Select only well-shaped, firm cucumbers that are a deep green color.
- Avoid any exceptionally large cucumbers or those appearing puffy, shriveled or withered.
- At home, keep cucumbers cool and use within a few days.

CUCUMBER TIDBITS



- Cut cucumbers in half lengthwise, scoop out seeds and fill halves with tuna or ham salad for festive cucumber-salad boats.
- Marinate thin slices of cucumbers in sour cream seasoned with fresh lemon or lime juice, freshly chopped scallions and minced garlic.
- Try canning jar salad. In a canning jar, layer chopped cucumbers, tomatoes, onions and bell peppers. Pour Italian dressing over the vegetables and refrigerate overnight. Enjoy plain or on top of salad greens.
- Make dainty finger sandwiches by putting seasoned cream cheese or cottage cheese between two thin slices of cucumber.

CHOOSING CUCUMBERS FOR PICKLING

- Select unwaxed cucumbers for pickling, because pickling solutions cannot penetrate the wax.
- Do not expect good-quality pickles if you use “table” or “slicing” cucumbers.
- For highest quality, plan to pickle the cucumbers within 24 hours after picked.
- 1 bushel = 48 pounds and yields 24 to 30 quarts.
- Approximately 1½ to 2 pounds is needed for a 1-quart jar or container.

QUICK FRESH-PACK DILL PICKLES (About 7 to 9 pints)

To Prepare: Wash 8 pounds of 3- to 5-inch pickling cucumbers. Cut $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch slices off blossom ends and discard, but leave $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch of stem attached. Dissolve $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salt in 2 gallons water. Pour over cucumbers and let stand 12 hours. Drain. Combine 1½ quarts vinegar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and 2 quarts water. Add 2 tablespoons mixed pickling spices tied in a clean white cloth. Heat to boiling.

To Process: Fill jars with cucumbers. Add 1 teaspoon mustard seed and 1½ heads fresh dill (or 1½ teaspoons dill seed) per pint. Cover with boiling pickling solution, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water bath. Process pints for 10 minutes and quarts for 15 minutes at altitudes up to 1,000 feet. If processing at altitudes between 1,000 and 6,000 feet, process pints for 15 minutes and quarts for 20 minutes.

For more information on pickling cucumbers, request HGIC 3100, *Pickle Basics*, or HGIC 3420, *Pickled Cucumbers*, or contact your local Extension office.

Sources:

1. United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. *The Fresh Approach to Cucumbers*.
2. Reynolds, Susan and Paulette Williams. *So Easy to Preserve*, Bulletin 989. Revised 1999 by Elizabeth Address and Judy Harrison. Cooperative Extension Service, Univ. of Georgia.

This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by P.H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist; J.E. Campbell, graduate student; and E.H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University.

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