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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

October 2021

THE LEGACY OF HOME PRESERVATION – PICKLES

**Japanese Cucumber Salad
with Black Sesame and Ginger**

Pickled and Spiced Pear Halves

Slow Cooker Onion Marmalade

Sweet and Sour Spiced Pineapple

Vietnamese Spring Onion Sweet and Sour Pickles

When you order almost anything in a diner, you get a pickle; when you go to a picnic gathering, there are pickles; when you go to a Japanese restaurant, pickles. Today cubic yards of shelving in every grocery store are stacked with pickles. When I was a child, those pickle shelves were in our fruit cellar and there were lots of pickled vegetables. Fall harvest meant kitchens full of women preparing and processing vegetables for winter meals. One of my first jobs as a child when I was accepted into this gathering and not sent off to play or read a book, was to peel carrots for the mustard pickle. Breaking the cauliflower heads into just the right sized florets came next and eventually you were rewarded with a knife of your own to trim those florets and slice cucumbers and chop peppers and squashes and onions and . . . and . . . and . . . Soon you were allowed to cut the corn from the cobs for corn relish. No more just moving vegetables from Grandma to Mom or to the various aunts that volunteered to help out and no more lugging the trimmings to the compost pile. These jobs were passed on to the younger children and so it went until the 1970s.



Although we waited for the harvest to come in and we preserved because our winter food supply depended upon our “putting things by” during the early years of the last century, today the availability of frozen corn and pearl onions can give

us the opportunity to make corn relish and onion pickles anytime we get the urge for those pickled vegetables. A small firm eggplant in the produce section of our grocery might end up as *caponatina* or a flavorful Asian pickled salad. Our winter food supply today, with few exceptions, does not depend upon our diligence within hours after harvest but I still feel pride when I do can; it makes me feel very connected to the past. My family pickled for the long haul or maybe I should say for the long winter. Pickles were winter vegetables and bridged the gap between growing seasons.

The only families I routinely see who still preserve as we did are the Amish and Mennonites who live in this area of Pennsylvania. The German tradition of my mother's family is alive and well in these farm families. I still can relishes and fruits and jams but most of the traditional pickle activity in my kitchen consists of small batches of overnight pickles. After all, a trip to the grocery is almost as simple as running down to the fruit cellar. Times have changed.

The Vietnamese scallion pickle included here is a quick pickle, a "three-day pickle." Quick pickles are also a specialty with Japanese homemakers. Pickles are an important component of the Japanese menu, eaten almost every day. Japanese cuisine offers so many ideas for overnight pickles that you will be, as was I, thoroughly amazed. They are served as salads much the way my family served the vegetables we pickled. A traditional *bento* box, no matter what you order, will contain something pickled. The garnishes served with classic *sushi* and vegetable *sushi* will often be pickled vegetables to pair with *wasabi*.

Leftover pickle juice from jarred pickles can be the base for a really quick pickle. Just parboil your vegetable of choice for no more than four minutes, drain, drop it into the commercial pickle juice, and refrigerate for forty-eight hours.

Vegetable pickles are not the only pickles, not the only garnishes. Fruits are wonderful garnishes and pickled fruits are a way to create complimentary savory garnishes. I have included recipes for pineapple and pears that have worked beautifully for me in bringing life to a dull menu with sweet/savory panache.

For those of you to whom canning is a familiar homemaking task, these recipes may seem simplistic. The choice from my files was designed to invite the uninitiated into the fold.

JAPANESE CUCUMBER SALAD WITH BLACK SESAME AND GINGER

TPT - 1 hour and 21 minutes;
10 minutes = cucumber draining period;
1 hour = flavor development period

Organic cucumbers are increasingly available year-round, wrapped tightly in their plastic sleeves and generally tasteless. I wait for the local crop to come to the farmers' market and then I take out my sushi plates and serve this salad as a side. The flavors are complex and fascinating. The marinade may be of Chinese origin but the presentation is very Japanese. I often use this salad as "the pickle" for a Japanese meal and as the cooling partner for a spicy Indian meal.

**3 organic, unwaxed, in-season baby cucumbers
unpeeled or peeled, as preferred***

Salt



**2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
1 1/2 teaspoons *tamari* soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon sugar or *mirin*, if preferred
1/2 teaspoon *very finely* grated fresh gingerroot
Pinch crushed red pepper flakes—*finely*
chopped**

1/4 teaspoon *toasted* black sesame seeds

Score the peeled cucumbers with the tines of a fork. Slice *thinly*. Place a layer of cucumber slices in a colander set over the sink. Sprinkle with salt. Continue layering and sprinkling with salt until all cucumber slices are in the colander. Allow to drain for 10 minutes. Rinse thoroughly in several changes of cold water. Drain thoroughly. Turn into a mixing bowl.

In a small bowl combine rice wine vinegar, soy sauce, sugar or *mirin*, very *finely* grated gingerroot, and *finely* chopped red pepper flakes. Combine thoroughly. Pour over cucumbers. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow for flavor development. Using a slotted spoon, transfer cucumbers to a serving bowl. *Reserve marinating liquid in case you have leftovers.*

Sprinkle *toasted* black sesame seeds over.

Serve chilled using a slotted spoon. Return leftovers to marinating liquid and refrigerate.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: *Do not be tempted to use winter cucumbers thinking that the marinade will disguise the lack of flavor in the cucumbers.

This recipe is easily doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 0.5 g.; FAT = 0.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 3.3 g.;
CALORIES = 16; CALORIES FROM FAT = 17%



PICKLED AND SPICED PEAR HALVES

TPT - 3 weeks, 1 hour, and 27 minutes;
1 hour = cooling period;
3 weeks = flavor development period

My grandmother always canned seckle pears, pears from the tree in her yard planted by her father shortly after he brought the family to America in the 1880s. Occasionally I find those lovely, tiny pears in my market but today you can no more set your canning schedule for seckle pears than you can for Italian blue plums. As a result of availability and to cut preparation time, I decided to substitute canned pear halves to prepare a savory/sweet garnish. This is my favorite garnish when serving a porkless pork product or when I serve one of my favorite Thanksgiving entrées, roasted vegetable pastry roll. [recipe archives – November 2018]. I also serve these with an assortment of cheeses during the holidays . . . lovely contrasting flavors.

2 cans (15-ounces each) pear halves packed in juice—there should be 12 halves

1 1/2 cups pear-canning liquid
1/2 cup light brown sugar
2/3 cup apple cider vinegar
2 one-inch pieces cinnamon stick
8 whole cloves
2 small pieces fresh gingerroot
Pinch ground cinnamon
Pinch ground cloves
Dash ground mace
2 cloves whole star anise (just cloves, not the whole bulb)



Sterilize three pint canning jars. Also sterilize lids and rings to seal.

Drain canned pear halves. *Reserve canning liquid.*

In a saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine 1 1/2 cupfuls pear-canning liquid, brown sugar, vinegar, cinnamon stick pieces, whole cloves, gingerroot pieces, ground cinnamon, ground cloves, ground mace, and star anise cloves. Allow to come to the boil. Boil 5 minutes. Pour hot liquid through a fine sieve into a clean saucepan. Allow to cool slightly. Discard spice residue.

Spoon four pear halves into each of the three sterilized pint canning jars. Divide hot liquid among them, covering pears. If you need more liquid add hot canning liquid and vinegar, 50:50. Wipe lip of jars. Seal with lid and sealing rings. Allow to cool to room temperature. Refrigerate for several weeks to allow for full flavor development.



Yields 12 pear halves—four in each jar

Note: This recipe is easily doubled. If you have room in your refrigerator, you have a welcome holiday garnish at your fingertips.

1/12 SERVING (including canning liquid) –
PROTEIN = 0.2 g; FAT = 0.2 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 21.0 g.
CALORIES = 85; CALORIES FROM FAT = 2%



SLOW COOKER ONION MARMALADE

TPT - 13 minutes)
[slow cooker: 3 hours at HIGH; 3 hours at LOW]

I have experimented with this recipe time and time again and then one day “that light bulb moment” struck. Combining a sweet onion with an Italian red onion gave me just the taste I was looking for and using the slow cooker gave me the texture I had sought. I use a garlic-basil vinegar which is a standby in my kitchen. If you do not make your own vinegar, a red or white wine vinegar will do nicely.

1/2 large Italian red onion—chopped to yield 1 1/4 cups
1/2 large sweet onion—chopped to yield 1 1/4 cups
1 garlic clove, or to taste—peeled and *finely* chopped
1/4 cup firmly-packed *light* brown sugar
1 teaspoon whole, dried thyme leaves—crushed*
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1/2 cup vinegar of choice
2 tablespoons red wine

Coat the bowl of the **slow cooker** with non-stick lecithin spray coating. Preheat to **HIGH**.

Add chopped red and sweet onion, *finely* chopped garlic, brown sugar, crushed, dried thyme, and black pepper.



In a small saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, bring vinegar and red wine to the boil. Add to onion mixture in the slow cooker. Stir. Cover and allow to cook for 3 hours on *HIGH*. Reduce slow cooker thermostat to *LOW* and cook for an additional 3 hours, or until most of the liquid has been absorbed and onion is soft. Stir occasionally to avoid drying. Turn onion marmalade into a saucepan.

Set the saucepan over *MEDIUM-LOW* heat and cook *stirring frequently* until any remaining liquid has evaporated. *It will thicken somewhat more when refrigerated.*

Turn into a glass jar and seal tightly. Store in the refrigerator, if not to be used immediately. It will keep for several weeks. If preferred, ladle *hot* relish into sterilized jars, seal with sterilized lids and rings, and can by processing in a **hot-water-canner** for 10 minutes. It will keep for several months when sealed this way.

Yields about 2 1/2 cupfuls

Notes: *Fresh thyme can be substituted but don't use ground thyme, the stale flavor is way too obvious in this dish.

This recipe is easily doubled.

A tablespoonful of onion marmalade mixed with three tablespoonfuls of mayonnaise makes a pleasant dressing for hard-cooked eggs.

1/20 SERVING (about 1 tablespoonful) –
PROTEIN = 0.2 g.; FAT = 0.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 4.1 g.;
CALORIES = 11; CALORIES FROM FAT = 0%

SWEET AND SOUR SPICED PINEAPPLE

TPT - 25 hours and 7 minutes;
24 hours = cooling period

I remember putting this recipe aside year after year because I just didn't want to tackle fresh pineapples. Continually telling myself that I was waiting to splurge on truly wonderful Hawaiian pineapples, that were rarely available, contented me for a while. Then came the cored, dated, and ice-packed fresh pineapples, available in the produce section of almost every well-stocked market, admittedly from South America and not from Hawaii. There was really no need to make excuses. This can make a starring appearance as a salad, in the style of the sweet and sours served by our Mennonite neighbors, or as a lovely garnish for almost any fruit dish, even stir-fries. These can be canned using a hot-water bath canner [see below] or stored in a refrigerator for several months.

7 whole cloves

1 1/2 cups sugar

1 1/2 cups water

3/4 cup distilled white vinegar

1 cinnamon stick—broken in half

2 cored and peeled, whole, fresh pineapples

Sterilize three 1-pint jars. Also sterilize lids and rings for jars.

Put cloves into a tea ball or in a cheesecloth *bouquet garni* bag.

In a large saucepan, combine sugar, water, and vinegar. Bring to the boil over *MEDIUM* heat. Add bag of cloves and broken cinnamon sticks. Cook, stirring frequently, until sugar is dissolved.

Meanwhile, cut cored and peeled pineapples in lengthwise quarters. Cut each quarter into 1/2-inch crosswise pieces.

When sugar is dissolved, add pineapple pieces. Simmer for 30 minutes. Remove spice bag and cinnamon stick pieces.



Ladle into the sterilized 1-pint canning jars, being sure that the sugar–vinegar solution covers the fruit.* Carefully wipe rims of jars. Seal with hot, sterilized lids and rings. Process in **hot-water-bath canner** for 5 minutes, *timing from the moment the water reaches a full rolling boil*. Remove to surface covered with thick towels or newspapers. Allow to cool for 24 hours *undisturbed*. Check to be sure jars are sealed before labeling and storing in a dark, cool, dry place.** Loosen or remove rings before storing.

Yields three pint jars
with a total of about twelve 1/3-cup servings

Notes: *Discard any liquid not used or use it to make a quick pickle.

**Any jars that do not seal can be stored in the refrigerator for several months or resealed using a *NEW LID*.

This recipe can be doubled, when required

1/12 SERVING (i. e., per 1/3 cupful) –
PROTEIN = 0.3 g; FAT = 0.3 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 41.2 g;
CALORIES = 145; CALORIES FROM FAT = 2%



VIETNAMESE SPRING ONION SWEET AND SOUR PICKLES

TPT - 3 days and 11 minutes;
3 days = minimum flavor development period

These are so good! A variety of vegetables were pickled in my family. Pickled boiling onions sat there on my grandmother's canning shelves under the insulating layers of newspaper . . . but never scallions. Pickles are also an important element of Vietnamese cuisine. It took a foray into the foods of Vietnam to find this simple pickle recipe. When the air cools and the last of the scallions in the garden must be harvested or sacrificed, this pickling procedure now becomes part of my autumn routine. Add a few to a simple salad of mixed greens; the sweet/sour is a pleasant surprise.

12 scallions (spring onions)—trimmed, well-rinsed, and sliced into 1-inch diagonal lengths
1 tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup rice wine vinegar, or more to cover

Sterilize a pint canning jar, a lid, and a ring.

Put well-rinsed scallion slices into the sterilized jar. Add sugar, salt, and vinegar. *Be sure scallions are covered by the vinegar.*

Put lid and sealing ring on. Refrigerate for at least 3 days before serving. Return unused portion to the refrigerator.

Yields about 1 cupful

Note: This recipe can be doubled or tripled or whatever if you have a large scallion harvest to preserve.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 0.2 g; FAT = 0.0 g; CARBOHYDRATE = 3.3 g;
CALORIES = 14; CALORIES FROM FAT = 0%



*From the tools of the past to a tool of the present,
a tool I find to be very useful, the panini press.
It's not just a sandwich press!!
Drop by next month and we'll look at some possibilities.*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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