

Real Food Fermentation: Preserving Whole Fresh Food with Live Cultures in Your Home Kitchen

By Alex Lewin

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Preserve your favorite foods through every season with *Real Food Fermentation*. Control your own ingredients, techniques, and additives. Learn a practical food-preparation skill you'll use again and again. And express yourself by making something unique and whole.

Inside, you'll find:

- All the basics: the process, the tools, and how to get started
- A guide to choosing the right ingredients
- Sauerkraut and beyond—how to ferment vegetables, including slaw-style, pickles, and kimchi
- How to ferment dairy into yogurt, kefir, crème fraîche, and butter
- How to ferment fruits, from lemons to tomatoes, and how to serve them
- How to ferment your own beverages, including mead, kombucha, vinegar, and ginger ale
- A primer on fermented meat, fish, soy, bread, and more
- Everything you need to know about why the recipes work, why they are safe, what to do if they go wrong, and how to modify them to suit your taste

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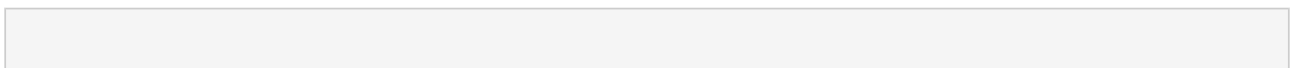
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Cucumber Pickles

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Cucumber Pickles

Pickled cucumbers, or simply “pickles,” are a quintessential fermented food. The first record of pickles comes from ancient Mesopotamia. Such diverse historical figures as Aristotle, Julius Caesar, Shakespeare, Amerigo Vespucci, and Thomas Jefferson are reported to have been fond of pickles. Indeed, Amerigo Vespucci, after whom America was named, was a pickle vendor before he became a world explorer. Pickles play a significant role in the food culture of many countries, from North America through Europe and into the Middle East.

Preparation:

1.) If your cucumbers are at all soft, if you bought them at the store, and/or if you suspect that they might have been picked a while ago, you can perk them up by soaking them in ice water.
2.) Trim the blossom ends off your cucumbers. These ends contain enzymes that can contribute to “hollow pickle syndrome.”
3.) Combine the chlorine-free water and salt in the pitcher, and add any starter or vinegar, if using.
4.) Place the seasonings and tannin providers at the bottom of the jar or crock, followed by the cucumbers.
5.) Pour the brine into the crock.
6.) Weight everything down in such a way that it stays submerged.
7.) If needed, cover the top of the jar or crock with the cloth, and affix the cloth with the rubber band.
8.) Store at cool room temperature. Every day after the second or third, pull out a pickle, cut off a piece with a clean knife, and taste it. When the pickles are pleasantly sour but still crunchy, they are done. Move them to a cool place (like the refrigerator) immediately. Yield: 3–4 pounds (1.5–2 kg), Prep time: 10 minutes, Total time: 3 days–2 weeks

Equipment:

Knife; Cutting board (wood is ideal); 1-gallon (4-L) pitcher; ½-gallon (2-L) mason jar, a Pickl-It, a Harsch

crock, or a plain glazed (lead-free) ceramic crock; Something to hold the cucumbers under the brine, like a small clean plate or saucer that fits inside the jar or crock (if needed); Clean dishtowel or cloth to cover the top of the jar or crock along with a rubber band (if needed).

Ingredients:

- 3 or 4 pounds (1.5 or 2 kg) small, thick-skinned cucumbers
- 2 quarts (2 L) chlorine-free water
- 1/2 cup (115 g) sea salt
- Up to 1 cup (250 ml) whey or 1 pint (475 ml) sauerkraut juice, or starter powder from an envelope (optional)
- Seasonings: generous amounts of whole garlic, bay leaf, etc. (optional)
- A few fresh grape or oak leaves, or a couple of black tea bags, for their tannins (optional)
- Red wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar, boiled and cooled to replace up to half of the water (optional)

About the Author

Alex Lewin, a graduate of Harvard, the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts, and the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, seeks to create a healthier and tastier world by spreading the word about fermentation and real food. He teaches fermentation classes and workshops and serves on the board of the Boston Public Market Association, working to create a year-round indoor market selling local food. He lives in Boston and San Francisco. To learn more about this book, visit RealFoodFermentation.com.

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