



Summer Vegetable Pickle

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

A selection of fresh, organic vegetables. I've used cauliflower, zucchini, carrot, banana chili, pearl onions, celery, red and yellow peppers and broccoli.

Vinegar (white and/or cider)

Spring water

Mineral Salt

White Sugar

Pickling spices

You can use any mixture of pickling spices you like, or even a commercial pickling spice. You need to experiment a bit to work out what you like.

I use a fairly simple mix of yellow mustard seeds, whole peppercorns (white, black, pink), cloves, bay leaves and juniper berries. Other ingredients often used are coriander seeds, fennel seeds, allspice and cinnamon, but with a mix of vegetables I don't want the flavour of the spices to overpower them so I keep it basic.

Instructions

If you've never tried pickling before, this is a great dish to get started. It's an uncomplicated mix of fresh vegetables that can be used in many different ways. The sharpness of the vinegar and the cool crunch of the pickles are a great mix of summer flavours and textures.

Start by preparing your pickling jar(s). The jars can be sterilised by running them through the dishwasher, boiling or heating through in an oven. You don't have to be too finicky with this, as this pickle can easily be stored in the fridge. I use wide-mouth swing top glass pickling jars with rubber seals, but you can easily use recycled jam or pickle jars if you like.

Then prepare your vegetables. Wash them well, peel the onions and carrots (everything else can be left with the peel on) and cut them to the shapes you like. I prefer a longer pickle rather than in chunks. With the chillies you should pierce them a few times with a skewer to ensure that the pickling liquid gets inside it. Mix the vegetables and pack them tightly into the pickling jars. There is no need to pre-cook these, and I think the texture and nutritional value are both much better if you don't. The last step is the pickling liquid. Sorry about the mathematics here but it's the only way to make this scaleable.

I use a 1:1 mix of water to vinegar, and then for the vinegar I use a 1:2 mix of cider vinegar to white vinegar. What this means is that if I want 1.2L of pickling liquid, I will use 600mL of spring water, 200mL of cider vinegar and 400mL of white vinegar.

Add your liquids to a saucepan and bring to the boil with 1-2 tbsps each of sugar and salt per litre. Add in your spices (about 2tbsps total per litre) and boil for a minute or so before removing from the heat.

Pour the boiling liquid over the vegetables and make sure they are completely covered. It's preferable to store this in the fridge, but if you don't have room it will keep fine in a cool, dark place. I'd recommend serving them cold though, so you will want to transfer it to the fridge to chill before serving. The pickles will be ready after 24 hours, but will keep for months.

Here are some ideas on how to use them:

- An accompaniment to cold meats and cheese for an antipasto plate.
- Chopped and mixed into a salsa or guacamole for fish or grilled meat.
- As part of a lunch platter with quiche and cold roast chicken.
- As a side dish to a hamburger or sandwich instead of a dill pickle.
- Finely diced as they are and served as a pickle or relish accompaniment to a dry fried curry. (I highly recommend this. The acidity is PERFECT to cut through a rich curry and the colours look fantastic.)

These pickles are incredibly versatile so make sure you make enough to last you all through summer!
