

Three kinds of easy homemade pickles

By **GRETCHEN MCKAY**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

It's the rare person who doesn't love pickles.

Besides giving hamburgers a crunchy, vinegary finish or a bloody Mary martini its zing, pickles are packed with the good bacteria called probiotics, which makes them terrific for gut health.

You might like pickles even more if you knew how easy they are to make with just a few simple ingredients you might already have in your pantry.

If you go with the refrigerator version, all you have to do is slice a few cucumbers and boil a mixture of water, vinegar, sugar and spices. Fridge pickles are exactly as billed: a type of fresh pickle that goes right into the refrigerator instead of being preserved in a hot water bath and put up. They can last for up to a month chilled, though the longer they sit, the less crisp they become.

For those of you who simply, ahem, relish pickles, we're providing 3 recipes for fridge pickles: old-fashioned bread and butter

(sweet, with onions), classic dill and quick-pickled peaches, which sound weird but actually taste great on top of pound cake or vanilla ice cream.

All are easy, and just as tangy and flavorful as canned pickles. Be sure to wash the produce thoroughly and sterilize the pickling container before packing the pickles. I use glass Mason jars.

BREAD AND BUTTER PICKLES

These have a crisp texture and sweet-sour flavor. They pair well with cheese and are awesome on top of a crispy chicken sandwich.

2 pounds pickling cucumbers, sliced thin
1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
1/2 large sweet onion, thinly sliced
2 cups sugar
2 cups white vinegar
1 cup apple cider vinegar
1/2 cup light brown sugar
2 to 3 teaspoons mustard seeds
1 teaspoon celery seeds
1/4 teaspoon ground turmeric

Combine cucumbers, onions

and salt in a large, shallow bowl; cover and chill 1-2 hours.

Remove cucumbers to a colander and rinse thoroughly under cold water. Drain well and return vegetables to bowl.

Combine granulated sugar, white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, mustard seeds, celery seeds and ground turmeric in a medium saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves, and cook for 1 minute.

Pour the hot vinegar mixture over the cucumber mixture. Let cool to room temperature, then ladle into pint jars or other airtight containers and refrigerate 24 hours. Store in an airtight container.

— Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

EASY REFRIGERATOR DILL PICKLES

This makes a bit more brine than you'll need for 4 pint-sized jars, but I hate it when I come up short. Fresh dill, which you can find in bunches at farmers markets, is essential.

12 pickling cucumbers
4 large garlic cloves, halved

3 teaspoons mustard seeds
3 teaspoons peppercorns
1 bunch dill sprigs
4 cups water
4 cups distilled white vinegar
1/2 cup cane sugar
4 tablespoons sea salt

Slice cucumbers lengthwise into quarters, or eighths, depending on how fat the cucumber is and how fat you want your pickles. To make dill pickle chips, thinly slice them horizontally.

Divide sliced cucumbers among four 8-ounce glass jars. Divide garlic, mustard seeds, peppercorns among the jars, and add a couple of dill sprigs to each jar.

Bring water, vinegar, sugar and salt to a simmer in a medium saucepan set over medium heat. Stir until sugar and salt dissolve, about 1-2 minutes. Let cool slightly and pour over cucumbers. Set jars aside to cool to room temperature, then place in the refrigerator.

Pickles will get more flavorful the longer they sit in the fridge. They can be stored for several weeks.

— Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

QUICK PICKLED PEACHES

5. Whisk in 1 1/2 cups milk until smooth. Heat to a boil, then reduce heat and whisk constantly for 3 minutes. Stir in pureed corn and 3/4 teaspoon salt. Remove from heat.

6. Stir in 1 1/2 cups white cheddar cheese, then egg yolks. Stir until the cheese is melted. Stir in 1/4 cup thinly sliced chives.

7. Cover with plastic wrap directly on the surface and set aside for up to 30 minutes.

8. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Generously butter a 3-quart baking dish that is at least 2 inches deep.

9. Beat the egg whites on high until foamy. Beat in 1 tablespoon sugar until soft peaks form, but mixture is not dry.

10. Use a rubber spatula to fold 1/3 of the whites into the corn and cheese mixture to lighten it. Then transfer the mixture to the remaining egg whites in the bowl. Fold gently until most of the streaks of egg white are incorporated. Scrape the mixture into the prepared baking dish.

11. Bake until puffed and top is deep golden brown, about 30 minutes. You can leave the dish in the turned off oven with the door slightly ajar for up to 30 minutes. Serve hot when it's at its puffiest, or at room temperature.

SWEET ONIONS AND MUSHROOMS FROM THE SKILLET

1 cup chopped onion
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon chili powder
1 teaspoon chili powder (for mild), 2 teaspoons (for medium) or 1 tablespoon (for spicy)
1/2 tablespoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can red kidney beans, undrained

1. Place a large pot on medium-high heat. If using turkey, add the oil. Cook the turkey or beef, onions and garlic powder, stirring frequently, until the meat is cooked through. Drain the liquid, if any, and return the ingredients to the pot.

2. Stir in the chili powder, smoked paprika, oregano, cumin, salt, tomatoes and beans. Cook, stirring occasionally, until beans are tender, about 15 minutes.

Per serving: 342 calories; 17 g fat; 4 g saturated fat; 78 mg cholesterol; 29 g protein; 21 g carbohydrate; 6 g sugar; 6 g fiber; 587 mg sodium; 98 mg



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

Pickled peaches are easy to make and will add a surprising, summery tang to ice cream or pound cake.

Pickling fruit brings out its natural sweetness, with a bit of zip. This recipe for pickled peaches makes an excellent topping for a variety of desserts, including vanilla ice cream. "Very different taste, but good with pound cake," my sister told me after sampling the jar I gifted her. Be sure to pick peaches that are ripe but still firm or you will end up with mushy fruit. I used Gochugaru, the Korean version of red pepper flakes, for some extra kick.

1 1/2 cups cider vinegar
1 1/2 cups water
1 cup sugar
1 tablespoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon crushed red pepper

2 teaspoons whole black peppercorns
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 (2-inch) cinnamon stick, broken into small pieces
4 large, slightly firm peeled peaches

Combine first 8 ingredients in a large saucepan; bring to a boil. Cook 2 minutes, stirring until sugar dissolves.

Remove from heat; let stand 10 minutes. Cut each peach into 12 wedges. Add peaches to vinegar mixture and let stand 20 minutes. Remove peaches with a slotted spoon.

Makes about 2 cups.
— Adapted from cookinglight.com

VEGGIES

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and then add the second piece of bread to make a sandwich. Serve with plenty of napkins.

CURRY ROASTED CARROTS AND FINGERLING POTATOES

Prep: 20 minutes
Cook: 35 minutes
Makes 4 to 6 servings
This is also good with skinny sticks of peeled parsnips instead of carrots.

Ingredients:
1/4 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons ketchup
1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon hot red pepper sauce
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 pound fingerling potatoes, preferably multicolored, halved lengthwise
1 pound slender orange or multicolored carrots, ends trimmed, peeled, halved crosswise
1 large sweet onion, ends trimmed, halved cut into 1/2-inch thick wedges
1 can (14.5 ounces) black beans or chickpeas, drained
3 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as chives and cilantro

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly oil a large rimmed baking sheet.

2. Mix 1/4 cup oil, 2 tablespoons ketchup, 1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder, 1 teaspoon hot sauce, 1/2 teaspoon cumin and 1/2 teaspoon salt in the bottom of a large bowl.

3. Add 1 pound halved fingerling potatoes, 1 pound trimmed, peeled, halved carrots, 1 large cut onion and 1 can beans. Toss to coat well with the sauce.

4. Scrape mixture out onto prepared baking sheet. Bake, stirring once or twice, until potatoes and carrots are fork-tender, about 35 minutes.

5. Sprinkle with chopped herbs. Serve hot or at room temperature.

SWEET CORN, GREEN CHILE AND CHEDDAR PUDDING

Prep: 25 minutes
Cook: 1 1/4 hours
Makes 8 servings
Shred your own cheese for the best results; it will be free of additives.

Ingredients:
3 medium-size ears sweet corn, shucked OR 2 cups (8 ounces) frozen corn kernels
8 large eggs
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

1 white portion of large leek or 1 medium-size white onion, finely chopped
1 small poblano chile or medium-size jalapeno, cored seeded, finely chopped
6 tablespoons flour
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 1/2 cups skim or lowfat milk
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 cups white cheddar cheese, about 5 ounces
1/4 cup thinly sliced chives or green onions
1 tablespoon sugar

Directions:

1. Using a sharp knife and working over a shallow bowl, cut corn kernels from 3 medium-sized cobs. You should have 2 generous cups. Puree the corn nearly smooth with an immersion blender or in the food processor.

2. Carefully separate 8 eggs as follows: Crack one egg over a small bowl letting the whites run into the small bowl. Tip the yolk into a second small bowl. Then tip the egg white (which should be free of any yolk) into the large bowl of an electric mixer. Repeat to separate all the eggs in the same manner with the yolks in the small bowl and the whites in the large mixer bowl.

3. Melt 5 tablespoons butter in a large saucepan. Add the chopped white portion of 1 leek and 1 finely chopped chile pepper; saute until soft, about 5 minutes.

4. Stir in 6 tablespoons flour and 2 cloves crushed garlic; cook and stir for 2 minutes.

FAST

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1. Slice chicken breasts in half crosswise into 4 cutlets and lightly pound each piece between sheets of plastic wrap until an even thickness (about 1/2-inch thick or less). Season lightly with salt. Place flour in a medium shallow bowl. Working one at a time, place cutlets in bowl and toss to coat in flour. Knock off excess flour and transfer to a plate.

2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Working in batches if needed to avoid overcrowding the pan, cook cutlets, without moving them, until deeply browned underneath, about 2 minutes. Turn over and cook on the other side just until chicken is nearly cooked through, about 30 seconds. Transfer to a clean plate.

3. Add garlic and remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the skillet and cook, stirring often and reducing heat if needed to keep garlic from scorching, until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Add wine and capers and cook, swirling pan and scraping up any browned bits stuck to the bottom of skillet, until liquid is almost completely evaporated, about 3 minutes. Add 1/2 cup water, followed by the butter. Swirl pan vigorously while butter melts to help it form an emulsion with water, about 1 minute.

4. Return chicken to skillet and simmer until chicken is cooked through and sauce is thick enough to coat a spoon, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir lemon juice into sauce; season with salt.

Transfer chicken and sauce to a platter and top with parsley; serve with lemon wedges.

Per serving: 435 calories; 26 g fat; 10 g saturated fat; 130 mg cholesterol; 33 g protein; 14 g carbohydrate; no sugar; no fiber; 700 mg sodium; 20 mg calcium
Recipe from Bon Appétit

BUCATINI WITH BELL PEPPER SAUCE

Yield: 4 servings

2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 shallot
1 small garlic clove
3 red or yellow bell peppers
12 ounces bucatini, linguine or fettuccine, see note
1/2 cup heavy cream
2 teaspoons chopped fresh marjoram
Salt and pepper
Note: Bucatini, a thick form of spaghetti with a hole through the middle, is available at specialty stores.

1. Put a large pot of salted water on high heat and bring to a boil. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large pan over medium low heat. Peel and chop the shallot; add to the pan. Chop the garlic and add to the pan; stir frequently. Chop the peppers; when you're done with the first, add it to the pan and turn the heat up to medium high. Stir occasionally while chopping the other peppers; add them to the pan.

2. Cook the pasta accord-

ing to the directions on the package.

3. Meanwhile, cook the peppers mixture, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 10 minutes. Place the mixture in a blender or food processor and process to a puree. Return to the pan, stir in the cream, and season with plenty of salt and some pepper to taste. Keep warm.

4. When the pasta is done, drain and add to the sauce. Cook for 1 minute, stir in the marjoram, and serve.

Per serving: 517 calories; 14 g fat; 5 g saturated fat; 17 mg cholesterol; 15 g protein; 84 g carbohydrate; 3 g sugar; 5 g fiber; 608 mg sodium; 111 mg calcium
— Adapted from "The Silver Spoon"

CHUCKWAGON CHILI

Yield: 4 servings

2 tablespoons oil, if using ground turkey
1 pound ground turkey or ground beef

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— Adapted from a recipe by General Mills

EASY HONEY GARLIC PORK CHOPS

Yield: 4 servings

4 pork chops
Salt and pepper
1 teaspoon garlic powder
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
6 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup honey
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1. Preheat oven broiler (or grill) on medium-high heat. Season chops with salt, pepper and garlic powder just before cooking.

2. Heat oil in a pan or skillet over medium high heat until

hot. Sear chops on both sides until golden and cooked through (about 4 to 5 minutes each side). Transfer to a plate; set aside.

3. Reduce heat to medium. Melt butter in the same pan, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Sauté garlic until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the honey, water and vinegar. Increase heat to medium-high and continue to cook until the sauce reduces down and thickens slightly, about 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally.

4. Place pork back into the pan, baste generously with the sauce and broil or grill for 1 to 2 minutes, or until edges are slightly charred. Per serving: 440 calories; 18 g fat; 6 g saturated fat; 140 mg cholesterol; 48 g protein; 20 g carbohydrate; 18 g sugar; no fiber; 725 mg sodium; 30 mg calcium

— Recipe from cafedelites.com

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