

FRUIT

Spiced Pickled Pears

Sweet pears, bright vinegar and the warmth of cinnamon. Serve this preserve with cheese, roasted squash or pâté. A few pieces are enough to bring a new flavour to the plate.

Recipe author: National Center for Home Food Preservation · University of Georgia



Recipe ingredient: fresh pears.

TIME

About 2 hours of preparation and processing +
12-24 hours of cooling

YIELD

About 7-8 US pint jars (473 ml each)

Method: Pickling in 5% acidity vinegar + boiling-water canning

Season: Late summer and autumn

Storage: Store correctly processed, sealed jars in a cool, dark, dry place, ideally at 10-21°C. Use within a year for best quality. Once opened, refrigerate at no more than 4°C and use clean utensils. The recipe source gives no separate storage period after opening. If you discover a failed seal within 24 hours of correctly processing the jars, refrigerate and use within a week. Never taste food from a jar with a lost seal, mould, leaks, a bulging lid or any other signs of spoilage.

Ingredients

- ❑ 8 lb pears (about 3.63 kg), Seckel or another variety suitable for pickling; choose firm fruit that is not overripe
- ❑ 8 US cups white sugar, measured in 236.6 ml cups (about 1.893 litres by volume in total)
- ❑ 4 US cups white vinegar labelled 5% acidity (about 946 ml)
- ❑ 2 US cups drinking water (about 473 ml)
- ❑ 8 pieces of cinnamon stick, each 2 inches (about 5.1 cm) long
- ❑ 2 US tablespoons whole cloves (about 29.6 ml)
- ❑ 2 US tablespoons whole allspice (about 29.6 ml)
- ❑ To prevent browning: ½ teaspoon food-grade ascorbic acid in 1.893 litres (2 US quarts) of cold water; drain off this solution before cooking

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Equipment

- Prepare 8 Mason canning jars, US pint size (473 ml), with two-piece metal lids; a large covered canner with a rack; a jar lifter; measuring cups and spoons; and a clean spice bag. Wash the jars and keep them hot. Prepare lids according to the manufacturer's directions. Preheat the canner water to about 82°C.

Preparation

1. Prepare the water-bath canner

Heat the water in a covered canner fitted with a rack to about 82°C. Use Mason canning jars of the specified size with two-piece metal lids. Wash the jars and keep them hot. Prepare the lids according to the manufacturer's directions. For a recipe that requires overnight soaking, prepare the canner and jars on the day you fill them.

2. Make the spiced syrup

Combine the sugar, vinegar, water and cinnamon in a saucepan. Tie the cloves and allspice in a spice bag and add it to the pan. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer gently for about 30 minutes.

3. Prepare the pears

Wash and peel the pears, removing all of the blossom end. You may leave the stems attached. Halve or quarter large pears. Place the peeled fruit in the ascorbic acid solution as you work, then drain just before cooking.

4. Cook the fruit

Add the drained pears to the hot syrup. Bring back to the boil, lower the heat and simmer gently for another 20-25 minutes.

5. Fill the jars

Pack the hot pears into hot jars, adding one piece of cinnamon to each jar. Remove the spice bag. Cover the fruit with boiling syrup, leaving ½ inch (about 1.3 cm) headspace and making sure the pears are covered. Remove air bubbles and recheck the headspace. Wipe the rims and fit the two-piece lids according to the manufacturer's directions.

6. Process in boiling water

Place the jars upright on the rack in the preheated canner. The water must cover the lids by at least 2.5 cm (1 inch), or at least 5 cm (2 inches) if processing takes more than 30 minutes. Cover and bring to a full rolling boil. Start timing only once the water is boiling: 20 minutes at elevations up to 304.8 m (1,000 ft); 25 minutes above 304.8 m and up to 914.4 m (3,000 ft); 30 minutes above 914.4 m and up to 1,828.8 m (6,000 ft); 35 minutes above 1,828.8 m. Keep the water boiling throughout. If boiling stops, bring the water back to a full boil and restart the entire processing time.

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7. Cool and check the seals

Turn off the heat, remove the canner lid and wait 5 minutes. Lift the jars out upright. Leave them undisturbed for 12-24 hours. Do not press down on the lids or retighten the bands. Check the seals, remove the bands, then wash and dry the jars and label them with the date.

Tips

This is vinegar pickling, not fermentation. Do not replace the specified 5% acidity vinegar with homemade vinegar, kombucha or vinegar of unknown acidity. Keep the ingredient proportions, jar size, headspace and full processing time unchanged.

One US cup is 236.6 ml; one US pint is 473.2 ml; one US half-pint is 236.6 ml. Gram equivalents for ingredients measured by volume are approximate. Use the original volume measures when following this recipe. Do not apply these processing times to larger jars.

A home-canning processing time does not validate commercial production. Changes to batch size, packaging or ingredients require assessment of the process and shelf life of the specific product.

Choose firm pears that are not overripe. The ascorbic acid solution reduces browning and is drained off before cooking.

Allergens: check the vinegar label for SULPHITES and review the spice specifications. Cheese and bread served alongside the pears introduce their own allergens.

How to serve

Serve a few drained pieces with mature cheese, roasted squash or pâté. You can also finely chop a pear and add it to a sandwich. These are Fermentarnia serving suggestions. Add these accompaniments on the plate, not to the jars before canning.

About the ingredient

A rose relative with an autumn harvest

The common pear, *Pyrus communis*, belongs to the rose family. Kew gives its native range as Europe to northern Iraq. For pickling, choose firm, slightly underripe fruit: OSU explains that it holds its shape better during cooking. An overripe pear is more likely to become a purée than a neat piece in a jar.

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History on the plate

A pear from an old newspaper

The Medford Mail Tribune of 4 December 1952 described homemade spiced pickled pears as a way to give meals a festive touch. Firm Bosc pears were used. The article helps explain the preserve's role: fruit could be a condiment for dinner as well as a dessert. It documents the dish in the cooking of that period, rather than establishing when it was invented. The historical recipe is not the basis for today's canning instructions.

Under the microscope

What science tells us

NCHFP recommends tested proportions and uniform acidity throughout the product. A sour-tasting pickling liquid does not, by itself, confirm that the contents of the jar are safe. Vinegar of a known acidity and the specified heat treatment are therefore integral to this recipe. For small producers and food businesses, this is a home-canning procedure. Changes to scale, ingredients, packaging or heating method require assessment of the specific process and product shelf life; these instructions do not validate commercial production. Do not replace the specified 5% acidity vinegar with homemade vinegar, kombucha or wine vinegar of a different acidity.

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