

Spicy Dill Pickles

by Angie Ouellette-Tower

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7 to 8 lbs of fresh pickling cucumbers (scrubbed, washed & drained)
3 large onions (sliced into thin circles)(vidalia onions are wonderful for this recipe)
8 to 10 dried whole cayenne peppers
10 sprigs of thyme
1 jar of pickling spices
10 fresh dill heads (as seen in the picture above)
1 jar of dried black peppercorns
10 cloves of garlic (peeled & left whole)
20 Bay leaves

Prepare the cucumbers, garlic and onions as described above (and gather the remaining ingredients).

Brine

7 cups water
10 cups vinegar
1 cup sugar
1 cup Pickling salt (or Kosher salt)

Gather your canning jars, lids and rings (you will need 8 to 10 quarts). [Canning Basics - Jar Sizes](#). Also, gather all other canning supplies: [Other Canning Supplies](#) .

Start the water boiling for Jar sterilization: [Sterilizing Jars & Lids](#)

In a large stock pot combine the vinegar, sugar, water and (pickling) salt and bring to a boil over medium heat.

By now your water for jar sterilization should be boiling - sterilize your jars 2 at a time. Take them out and begin "raw packing" ([Raw Pack vs. Hot Pack](#)) the vegetables. Start with a few onion rings and 1 garlic clove at the bottom of the jar and then start filling with the cucumbers. When the jar is half way full, pick up the jar (with oven mitts) and gently shake the cukes down (I gently shake the jar against the palm of my other hand - also covered with an oven mitt - **the jars are very hot!!**) This shaking helps the cucumbers settle in the jar and it makes more room for more cucumbers- you want to get the jar as packed as possible. Less brine will be used if your jars are packed quite tight. When the jar is about half full - add 1 dill head, 1 (or 2) cayenne pepper(s), 1 sprig of thyme & 2 bay leaves. Continue filling the jar with pickles but leave enough room at the top of each jar for a few more onion rings (Never fill above where the jar rings begin). © (2012)

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Top with a few more onion slices and then finally add 1 teaspoon of pickling spice (per jar) & 1 teaspoon of black peppercorns (per jar). (Continue sterilizing jars and Raw Packing them until all of the cucumbers have been used up)

Place the "Raw Packed" jars in a preheated 350 degree oven for 8 minutes (This is before you pour the boiling brine on top). After the 8 minutes remove the jars from the oven and slowly pour boiling brine in each jar - (you want to do this slowly so that the bubbles can work their way to the top before sealing each jar). Fill the brine up to the bottom ring thread of each jar (about 1 inch head space) (sometimes, if you see bubbles - take a plastic spoon and gently insert into the jar until the bubble is released to the top). Now you are ready to place a sterilized lid and ring on each jar - make sure the ring is screwed on tightly. Now place the jars on the counter or table for 12 hours and you should hear that wonderful popping sound of the jars sealing. The next day, check and make sure that all jars are sealed - (if you press down on each lid and it moves up and down that means that it did not seal - you can put any unsealed jar in the fridge and eat them as refrigerator pickles)

Place all the sealed jars in the pantry and allow them to "season" for 3 months (or more) and then **enjoy! (If they are sealed properly they will last for 2 years).**

NOTE: This recipe makes about 10 quarts but it all depends on how tightly you pack your jars - sometimes you might run out of brine because the jars have more space to fill. If that happens and you need a little more brine then just cut the brine recipe in half)