

Make Pickled Peppers At Home

Unless you are Peter Piper, pickled peppers are more than a tongue twister. They are a delicious way of preserving fresh peppers. Pickling peppers is one of the most popular and traditional methods of preserving peppers.

Pickled peppers are among the easiest vegetables for canning! You can pickle any pepper of your choice! You can go from sweet to medium, all the way to super-hot peppers. You can never go wrong with a classic jalapeno which provides just the right amount of heat. To make pickled peppers, fresh peppers are sliced, then mixed with a salt and vinegar brine. The brine adds tang and flavor as it marinates and preserves the peppers.

Although many people enjoy the spicy heat that chile peppers and cayenne peppers add to food, heat seekers need to be aware of potential hazards. The source of this flavor in peppers is known as capsaicin. About 80 percent of a chile's capsaicin is found in the ribs and seeds, which can be removed to reduce its heat.

Use rubber gloves when handling hot pepper varieties, and do not touch your face or eyes. Hot pepper juice can be caustic to the eyes or skin.

Pickling peppers is not difficult. You can choose to preserve the peppers by refrigeration or boiling water canning.

If you are newer to canning or do not have much time on your hands, opting for refrigerator pickled peppers is a good idea. You do not need to fuss over temperatures or timing. Just make a brine and add your chile peppers!

If you process peppers using the boiling water canning method, the peppers are shelf stable and can be stored at room temperature. Just imagine pulling out a jar of homemade pickled peppers in the middle of the winter!

An unopened jar of processed pickled peppers can be stored at room temperature for up to 3 years. You can eat the pickled peppers right away, but they will be best if you can wait at least three weeks before eating. This will allow enough time for the peppers to be fully pickled. Once opened, the peppers must be stored in the refrigerator in a tightly sealed container. You have up to 3 months to enjoy your delicious peppers!

A pickled product's acidity level is as crucial to its safety as it is to taste and texture.

- Do not alter vinegar, food, or water proportions in a recipe.
- Use vinegar with 5 percent acidity.
- Use research-tested recipes published after 2015 for the proper acidity. Follow Ball, Extension, or USDA recipes.
- There must be a minimum, uniform level of acid throughout the mixed product to prevent the growth of botulinum bacteria.

When boiling water canning, you must adjust the processing time according to your elevation if you are above 1000 feet sea level. As altitude increases, water boils at lower temperatures, so the time must be increased. Use the recommended Ball or USDA times to increase processing or call your local county Extension Office.

Once you have got your jar of pickled peppers, it is time to get creative! Here are some great ways to try pickled peppers:

- On chili, stew, or soup
- As a condiment for sandwiches, burgers, hot dogs, and sausages
- Top burritos, enchiladas, fajitas, nachos, and tacos with them
- Combine them with scrambled eggs or add them to omelets
- Use them as a pizza topping
- Add them to salads
- Try them on cheese plates and charcuterie boards
- Chop them and mix with cream cheese for a quick dip

Try your hand at pickling peppers at home to preserve summer heat the whole year round!

(Sources: *The All New Ball Book of Canning and Preserving*, 2016; www.freshpreserving.com; nchfp.uga.edu/index.html; www.poison.org)