



The best way to guarantee crisp pickles is to use them as fresh as possible (less than 24 hours after picking), and to process them with the low-temperature pasteurization method described here. Rather than boiling the cucumbers in the jars, the temperature remains high enough to kill off bacteria, but low enough to avoid overcooking the pickles.

Grape leaves are an old-fashioned addition - their tannin helps keep the pickles crisp. However, if you cut off the blossom ends of the cucumbers, you can do without the grape leaves.



503-645-1592
www.westuniongardens.com

Fresh-Pack Dill Pickles

Makes about 7 quarts

7-8 pounds pickling cucumbers, 3 to 5 inches long
6 cups white vinegar
6 cups water
½ cup salt
¼ cup granulated sugar
14-28 heads of dill (2-4 per quart, depending on the size of the heads)
14-28 cloves of peeled garlic (2 to 4 per quart)
peppercorns (8 or more per quart to taste)
about 5 tablespoons mustard seed (2 teaspoons per quart)
3 to 5 tablespoons red pepper flakes (1/2 to 1 teaspoon per quart)
7 grape leaves (optional)

Wash 7 quart jars; keep hot until needed. Prepare lids as manufacturer directs.

Wash the cucumbers. Cut off about 1/8 inch from the blossom ends, which contain an enzyme that can cause soft pickles. Wash the dill heads and grape leaves. Place in each jar one or two heads of dill, one grape leaf, garlic, peppercorns, mustard seed, and red pepper flakes. Pack the cucumbers in the jars, snugly but not overly tight. Leave just over ½ inch headspace. Add another head or two of dill.

Combine the vinegar, water, salt and sugar. Heat to boiling. Carefully pour the pickling solution into the jars, covering the cucumbers but leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and **process with low-temperature pasteurization treatment as follows:**

Place jars in a canner filled half-way with very warm water (120 to 140 degrees). Then add hot water to a level 1 inch above jars. Heat the water enough to maintain 180 to 185 degrees water temperature for 30 minutes. Monitor with a thermometer to be certain that the water temperature is at least 180 degrees during the entire 30 minutes. Temperatures higher than 185 degrees may cause unnecessary softening of pickles.

Allow at least 3 to 6 weeks for the flavors to develop before serving.

Adapted from "Complete Guide to Home Canning," U.S. Dept. of Agriculture