

# Analyzing Pickle Recipes

## Type of Pickle

Before deciding whether or not the pickle recipe is safe, one must first decide whether the pickle is a fermented (or brined pickle) or a quick (or fresh pack) pickle. The following guideline will help determine the kind.

Quick or fresh pack. Recipes for fresh or quick pack pickles will have at least as much vinegar as water in the recipe. They will be heat processed immediately after they are made or else stored in the refrigerator.

Fermented or brined pickles. Recipes for fermented pickles generally have a small amount of vinegar and a fairly large amount of salt in the brine recipe. Brined pickles generally have a large amount of salt and the recipe calls for adding additional salt over a period of several weeks. The pickles are not ready to eat until after several weeks of fermentation.

## Why Recipes May Not Be Safe

Ingredients have changed over the years so old recipes may not be safe. For example, vinegar used to be sold at 7 percent (70 grain). This is much stronger than today's 5 percent vinegar.

Procedures for pickle recipes have changed over the years. It is now recommended that pickle recipes be heat processed. Older recipes do not recommend processing.

## Guidelines for Analyzing Pickle Recipes

Use up-to-date tested recipes from reliable sources.

- Make sure the recipe calls for vinegar that is 5 percent acidity.
  - For fresh or quick pack pickles, make sure the recipe has at least as much vinegar as water.
  - If lime is used, be sure it is U.S.P. (pure) lime. Calcium gluconate, calcium lactate, calcium chloride and calcium hydroxide are foodgrade limes. Do not use slake lime purchased from the lumber yard. Be sure the recipes using lime call for rinsing the pickles thoroughly before the brine is added. Lime can make the pickles alkaline and has a terribly bitter taste.
  - Recipes for fermented or long cure pickles must include salt. It is important not to reduce the salt in fermented or brined pickles or use low-sodium salt.
  - Processing is recommended to prevent spoilage during storage of home preserved pickles.
- Quick or fresh pack pickles are processed as soon as they are made. Fermented or brined pickles will be processed after a 3-6 week fermenting time. DO NOT PROCESS THEM UNTIL THEY HAVE A SOUR TASTE.

Source: Foods and Nutrition specialist



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