

Harvest Pickles

Though food preservation techniques have existed since the beginning of time, we can take advantage of more refined techniques and variety of ingredients to make superb pickles in our time. And guess what. Pickles go really well with cured meats. They can add heat, cut the fat and complement flavors without you even knowing it because the match is so elemental. Power to the pickle.

Ingredients

chard stems

- 1 bunch rainbow or red chard, thick stems cut in half lengthwise
- 1 sprig fresh oregano
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 1/2 cup white wine vinegar
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 small shallots, thinly sliced
- 2 strips orange zest
- 1 bay leaf

fennel

- 1 small bulb fennel
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 3 tablespoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 4 strips lime zest
- 3 small cloves garlic, halved lengthwise
- 2 dried red chiles, such as chile de arbol

watermelon rind

- 1 (3-pound) wedge watermelon
- 1/2 cup mirin
- 1/2 cup rice wine vinegar (unseasoned)
- 1/2 cup sake
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger, cut into coins

special equipment

- 3 (1-quart) heatproof jars

Directions

for the chard stems

Bring a medium pot of water to boil. Strip or cut the leaves from the stems and reserve for another use. Trim the stems to fit into a 1-quart heatproof jar with a lid. Blanch the stems in the boiling water for 1 minute, then run under cold water until cool. Fill the jar with the stems and snuggle in the herb sprigs.

Bring the white wine vinegar, water, salt, sugar, shallot, orange peels and bay leaf to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the salt and sugar. Carefully pour into the jar. Push the orange strips and shallots down into the liquid. Let cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate. They'll be ready to eat once fully chilled, and will keep for about a week in the fridge.

for the fennel

Trim the tops of the fennel, leaving some of the stalk and fronds. Remove the hard core and cut the bulb into 1/2-inch wedges. Put the all the fennel pieces into a 1-quart heatproof jar with a lid.

Bring the white vinegar, water, salt, coriander and fennel seeds, turmeric, lime strips, garlic and chiles to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the salt and sugar. Carefully pour the liquid into the jar. Push the aromatics down into the liquid. Let cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate. They'll be ready to eat once fully chilled, and will keep for about a week in the fridge.

for the watermelon rind

Scoop or cut the watermelon flesh off the rind and reserve for another use (such as our Watermelon Margarita) – it's OK to have some pink remaining. With a vegetable peeler or sharp knife, remove the hard green skin. Cut the rind into 1-inch lengths, and then into 1-inch chunks. Put into a 1-quart heatproof jar with a lid.

Bring the mirin, rice wine vinegar, sake, soy sauce, sugar and ginger to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-heat heat, stirring to dissolve the salt and sugar. Carefully pour into the jar. Push the ginger down into the liquid. Let cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate. They'll be ready to eat once fully chilled, and will keep for about a week in the fridge.

total time: 45 minutes, plus cooling and chilling times

active prep: 45 minutes

Serves: 6 to 8

difficulty: *easy*