

Garden Food

CUCUMBERS

Cucumber vines like children need a lot of space to grow, run and play

Growing up in the 70s, we ran around the neighborhood playing kick the can, dingdong ditch and tag. But by far my favorite past time was raiding the neighbor's gardens. My best friend and I grabbed cucumbers and tomatoes and sliced them, added salt and pepper. I can still taste the deliciousness exploding in my mouth. If we had an abundant crop we would make vinegar salad goodness that extended the life of the cucumber. We never used measuring cups so here's the best recollection of the recipe.

Cucumber Salad

Slice cucumbers as thin as you can

Add equal amounts of water and vinegar to cover cucumbers

Add a generous amount of salt and sugar

Put in fridge, and enjoy for the next week

Later in life I learned to add sliced white onion, dill and sour cream

For people who need a recipe here's a close version I found on Pinterest

2 Cucumbers

1 Onion

1 cup of white or apple cider vinegar

¼ cup of Sugar

1 cup of Water

1. Peel and slice the cucumbers thinly
2. Slice the onion
3. In a container with a lid combine the water, vinegar and sugar.
4. Stir until combined.
5. Add the cucumbers and onions. Place lid on top and shake.
6. Place in the refrigerator and let it cool for at least a few hours.
7. Enjoy

In Junior high school, my parents retired and moved the remaining kids in the family to a small town in northwest Wisconsin. My mom discovered a farm that sold pickling cucumbers. I watched my mom can several different things in our 1 bedroom, 1 loft cabin with no air conditioning converted into a house with 5 teenagers; but, the pickles were my favorite. Years later and after my mom died my sisters and I were going through her things and found a copy of

the pickle recipe. I attempted to make the pickle recipe with cucumbers from the farmers market. Epic fail. The pickles were mushy and not edible. Later, I found out you really need to use well or distilled water. The cucumbers need to be fresh picked from farm or garden. I was driving up north to visit my dad and stopped at Melon Vine Farm. He had several wooden bushels of pickling cucumbers. I had 2 young twin boys in tow and purchased a bushel. I stopped at grocery store and purchased all the supplies. It was 90 degrees that day, no air conditioning, very little help from my aging father in helping watch the toddlers, but I sweated and muscled through and canned a load of pickles. As I was sitting with my dad he became very emotional. The smell of vinegar, the lids popping, sitting in front of the fan sweating reminded him so much of mom. This is the original recipe I found and I added some math at the end for your convenience because every year I had to convert quarts into cups. Your welcome.

Mom's Kosher Dill Pickles

25 cucumbers dill size

1/8 tsp powder alum

1 clove garlic

1 hot chili pepper

2 heads of dill

1-quart vinegar

1 cup kosher salt

3 quarts of water

Pack into quart jar

Boil brine: vinegar water and salt

Pour over pickles and seal

Use well water and if that is not an option buy gallon jugs of distilled water.

If doing a big batch, I clean all the jars and lay out on table, Add all the ingredients to each jar.

Pack the cucumbers. Boil brine. Pour over. Seal. Process in a water bath for 10 minutes.

Here's the math:

1 quart = 4 cups

4 quarts = 1 gallon

I also used to make a big batch in a clean home depot bucket

1 gallon of white vinegar

3 gallons of water (distilled water from cub)

4 cups of salt

TOMATOES

Plant tomato plants deep into the soil, like families it will create a strong foundation for roots to run deep

My sister-in-law's grandparents migrated from Italy and going over to eat in her kitchen was a treat. Large cooking pans overhead, smell of garlic, watching her cook with fresh ingredients from the garden. Heaven.

Tomato Cucumber Salad

Fresh tomatoes cut into wedges

Fresh cucumber sliced thin

Fresh basil thinly sliced

Place in a container with lid

Add mayonnaise and balsamic vinegar to taste

Salt and pepper to taste

Shake

Enjoy

Her fresh version of spaghetti is a staple I make every summer after the 100s of cherry tomatoes ripen.

Fresh Tomato Angel Hair Pasta

She gets a big pot of water boiling

She chops a load of garlic, enough garlic to fill the bottom of a huge deep sauté pan

She adds a good half inch of olive oil to pan with the garlic

Once the garlic starts singing she slices a big load of cherry tomatoes in half and adds to pan

Slow cook for a little while but not too long or the skins of cherry tomatoes will break down

After the pasta is done she adds to the pan stirs around

Add a big bunch of Basil sliced thin

Serve with fresh cracked pepper and fresh sliced parmesan cheese

Fresh, light, delicious

BASIL

Like me who hates the cold, basil likes stay warm, do not plant outside if temperature goes below 50 degrees and don't store cuttings in refrigerator, instead put cuttings in glass water and wrap in plastic or wet paper towel in baggie and leave on the counter

Fresh basil from the garden adds sweetness to many dishes. Pesto added to angel hair pasta one of my favorite.

Pesto

A big bunch of basil that fills food processor

1 or 2 cloves of garlic

Zest of one lemon

Juice of one lemon

½-1 cup of Olive Oil

About a ¼ cup of Pine nuts, toasted

About a 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese

Put all the ingredients in a food processor except for Olive Oil. Process food processor until starts to break down everything. Slowly steam in oil. Just add enough oil until you get a desired consistency

Easy. Done. Delicious

We are lucky enough to have a cabin in northern Minnesota, it's connected to the Whitefish chain so we have access to over 10 lakes by boat. This drink is my favorite specialty drink on hot summer days when slow ride along the shore by boat

Basil Cocktail

1 wedge of lime

4-5 grapes

3-4 stems of basil

Vodka

Ginger ale or sprite

Muddle the lime grapes and basil in the bottom of glass. Add a shot of vodka. Top with Gingerale or sprite.

Sweet, refreshing, deliciousness