



Advice about Vinegar

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Types of Vinegar

The two most common vinegars are Apple Cider Vinegar and Distilled White Vinegar.

Cider vinegar

is derived from apples and is light golden in color with a tart fruit flavor. It has a milder flavor than distilled white vinegar. Because of its color, it may darken light colored fruits and vegetables.

Distilled white vinegar

is a clear, colorless liquid derived from grain alcohol that

has a sharp, pungent flavor. White vinegar is preferred when light color is desired for making fruit or cauliflower pickles. It does not compete with the distinctive flavors of

herbs and spices in a brine. Because it is clear, it does not change the color of light colored fruits and vegetables.

Vinegar products may imitate these vinegars. For example, apple cider flavored distilled vinegar is a white distilled vinegar with added natural flavor and caramel color.

If your research-tested recipe does not specify a particular type of vinegar, you may safely use either white or cider vinegar as long as it is labeled as 5% acidity. Sometimes it is labeled as 50 grain.

Specialty vinegars include red or white wine vinegar, malt vinegar, balsamic, and other flavored vinegars. Use these only when specified in a research-tested recipe.

More Terms

Apple cider vinegar that has not been filtered retains the “mother” of the vinegar. The “mother” is a compound created naturally during the vinegar fermentation process; it looks like strings or sheets of a cloudy substance in the vinegar. Look for the word “filtered” or “pasteurized” to avoid mother in your products.

Raw apple cider vinegar most likely means it has been unfiltered and organically grown.

Organic vinegar has been made from apples grown in soil that had no synthetic fertilizer applied within the last three years and to which no synthetic pesticides have been applied.

5% Acidity is the Gold Standard

- The standard vinegar used in home canning should be 5% acidity.
- Look at the label to be sure that the vinegar you are using is 5% acidity. Sometimes vinegar will be labeled as grain; 5% acidity is the same as 50 grain.
- Most white and cider vinegars used for making pickles and salsa are 5% acidity, but not all. Acidity level below 5% may result in spoilage as it is not adequate to control microbial growth.
- Only reduce the acidity when using a research-tested recipe that instructs you to add water to the product.
- Be aware the water in the food also dilutes the concentration of the brine. Some recipes direct you to soak cucumbers or other food product in salt water for a period of time before canning them in the pickling brine—this reduces the amount of water going into the brine.

New Names on Vinegars

- The names of vinegars found on store shelves may have you wondering if they are suitable for home food preservation. Some of these are labeled as Pickling or Canning Vinegar or Pickle Perfect. One brand sells a Chilled Dill Recipe Canning Vinegar that includes flavorings in the vinegar. These products may or may not be safe for home canning. Check the label to determine if the product is 5% acidity.
- A major manufacturer is selling a liquid “Pickling Vinegar Base” that is only 2.5% acidity. The acidity is reduced by the addition of water. The color of the product and the shape of the container looks just like regular canning vinegar. Other ingredients include sugar and salt.
 - The label says great for canning recipes but does not include any canned pickle recipes using the product. No recipes using the product were located on the company’s website.
 - The label does include a recipe for refrigerator pickles which would be safe.

Other Tips

- Do not dilute the vinegar with water unless it specifically says so in a research-tested recipe.
- Do not reuse leftover pickle juice in which vegetables or fruit have been cooked before being packed into jars. It is safe to use leftover pickle brine that has not contained any food product.
- Do not use homemade vinegar when pickling. The acidity of homemade vinegar is not consistent.
- Some balsamic or sherry vinegars are 6-7% acidity. Stay in the range of 5-7% acidity for home food preservation.
- Do not use cleaning vinegars or horticultural vinegars. These are EXTREMELY high in acid (11-30%), one is 75% acidity. These are **not** intended for food preservation.

Remember

- Read vinegar labels carefully
- Determine the acidity level.
- Identify other added ingredients. Why are they there?
- If it is a specialty vinegar—what is its purpose?
- Follow directions on the label exactly if it is a specialty vinegar.

