

## **In a Pickle? Try Pickling**

By Gloria Fitzpatrick, UCCE Master Food Preserver of El Dorado County

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The first sign of spring is here — asparagus hitting the markets. In my humble opinion you can never have too much of this herbaceous perennial vegetable. Grilled, steamed, BBQ, boiled, deep fried or pickled! Yes, pickled. Pickling is an easy and efficient way to preserve vegetables and fruit at their peak to have on hand throughout the year. Pickles are foods that have been soaked in a solution — either salt-based or vinegar-based, that helps prevent spoilage. Pickling can be found in cultures all around the world, and according to historians has been used as a preserving method for centuries.

Pickling is a great way to start your food preservation journey, too. You probably already have the basic equipment on hand (large stockpot, mason jars, lids) and if not, items can be found at most grocery, hardware, or big box markets. The methods for pickling are very straight forward and recipes abound from reliable sources. They can be tailored to your tastes with ease. A great reference for directions and a recipe can be found here:

[https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can\\_06/pickled\\_asparagus.html](https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/pickled_asparagus.html).

Follow instructions closely, including adjusting time for elevation.

Be sure to read through the directions prior to beginning and gather all of your ingredients before you start. A quick tip for you — measure out how long your spears need to be, including allowing about 1/2-inch headspace, and mark out the length on your cutting board for ease. Don't throw away the ends too fast either. Cut the remaining green parts of the asparagus into bite-sized pieces and process them as well in the pickling liquid. They make a great substitute for chopped pickles in potato and/or macaroni salads. Your guests will never know the difference!

Pickled asparagus makes a great addition to a charcuterie board, appetizer tray or Bloody Mary! Friends are happy to receive a gift of pickled asparagus and will secretly eat the delicious spicy spears while no one is looking, so plan on making a large batch! Don't limit your pickled vegetables to asparagus though — green beans make an excellent pickle as well.

As stated earlier, pickling also works very well for some types of fruits. I have fond memories of my mother as she made my favorite pickled fruit — pickled peaches. The tang of the cloves and the cinnamon was perfect over vanilla ice cream. The recipe for pickled peaches can be found here: <https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/FDNS-E-43-07.pdf>.

\*\*\*Caution\*\*\*Only use yellow peaches for canning purposes. White peaches have a higher pH level and cannot be safely preserved. They can be safely frozen or dried.

In addition to pickled peaches, I've had pickled figs, which again were fantastic, especially with a soft cheese on crackers. Your guests will be surprised at the flavor of this oft-forgotten fruit.

The next time you're fortunate to have an abundance of produce be sure to consider pickling in addition to your regular canning. Your pantry, family, and guests will thank you!

The UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County can help you if you are a beginner or a

seasoned pickler, or with general food preservation questions. Leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email us at [edmp@ucanr.edu](mailto:edmp@ucanr.edu). For more information about our program, events and recipes, visit our website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmp>. Sign up to receive our eNewsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpcsenews/>. Find us on Facebook, too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County)!