

# Causes and Possible Solutions for Problems with Pickled Foods

Problem	Cause	Prevention
<b>Soft or slippery pickles (If spoilage is evident, do not eat.)</b>	1. Vinegar too weak.	1. Use vinegar of at least 5% acidity.
	2. Insufficient amount of brine.	2. Keep cucumbers immersed in the brine.
	3. Pickles not processed properly (to destroy microorganisms).	3. Process pickles in canner after filling jars.
	4. Moldy garlic or spices.	4. Always use fresh spices.
	5. Blossom ends not removed from cucumbers.	5. Slice at least 1/16th inch off blossom end of cucumbers and discard.
<b>Strong, bitter taste</b>	1. Spices cooked too long in vinegar, or too many spices used.	1. Follow directions for amount of spices to use and the boiling time.
	2. Vinegar too strong.	2. Use vinegar of the proper strength (5% acidity).
	3. Dry weather.	3. No prevention. Bitter taste is usually in the peel or skin of fruits and vegetables.
	4. Using salt substitutes.	4. Potassium chloride, the ingredient in most of these, causes bitterness.
Problem	Cause	Prevention
<b>Shriveled Pickles</b>	1. Placing cucumbers in too strong brine, too heavy syrup, or too strong vinegar.	1. Follow a reliable recipe. Use amounts of salt and sugar called for in a recipe, and vinegar that is 5% acidity.
	2. Overcooking or over processing.	2. Follow a reliable recipe exactly.
	3. Dry weather.	3. No prevention. Bitter taste is usually in the peel

		or skin of fruits and vegetables.
<b>Dark or discolored pickles (If brass, copper or zinc utensils and brining equipment were used, do not use pickles.)</b>	1. Minerals in hard water.	1. Use soft water.
	2. Ground spices used.	2. Use whole spices.
	3. Spices left in jars of pickles.	3. Place spices loosely in cheesecloth bag so they can be removed before canning.
	4. Brass, iron, copper or zinc utensils used.	4. Use food-grade unchipped enamelware, glass, stainless steel, or stoneware utensils.
	5. Iodized salt used.	5. Use canning or pickling salt.
<b>Spotted, dull, or faded color</b>	1. Excessive exposure to light.	1. Store processed jars in a dark, dry cool place.
	2. Cucumber of poor quality.	2. Use produce of optimum quality, and grown under proper conditions (weather, soil, etc.)
<b>White sediment in jar.</b>	1. Salt contains an anti-caking agent or other additives.	1. Use canning or pickling salt.

**For problems with jar seals, and other general canned food problems, see [Causes and Possible Solutions for Problems with Canned Foods](#).**

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