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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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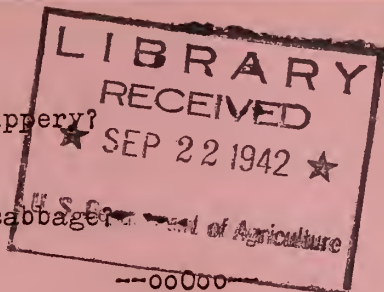
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In 3Hh
QUESTION BOX

Why pickles become soft and slippery?

Where keep cured pork?

How salt corn?

Relish of peppers, onions and cabbage



ANSWERS FROM:

scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Montana State Experiment Station.

More questions coming up today and more answers to these questions from scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and various State experiment stations.

Let's start off with a couple of queries about pickles.

"Why," says one letter, "have my pickles become soft and slimy, and what can I do about it?"

The answer comes from the Department of Agriculture bulletin on making fermented pickles. (It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1438, by the way. And its free to any housewife making pickles--free as long as the free supply lasts. To get this pickle bulletin you write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. and ask for "Making Fermented Pickles", Farmers' Bulletin No. 1438.)

But let's get back to answering the question. The bulletin says: "A soft or slippery condition, one of the most common forms of spoilage in making pickles, is the result of bacterial action. It always occurs when pickles are exposed above the brine, and very often when the brine is too weak to prevent the growth of spoilage organisms. To prevent soft or slippery pickles be sure to keep pickles well below the brine and be sure the brine is salty enough. To keep pickles more than a few weeks the brine should contain 15 percent salt."

Now as to the question: "What can I do about it?" the bulletin says: "Once pickles have become soft or slippery as a result of bacterial action no treatment will restore them to a normal condition."

So don't count on curing your slippery pickles. Instead take care of them so they won't get that way. Keep them well down under the brine--not even a few ends sticking up. And be sure the brine contains enough salt.

Now here's a question about keeping cured meat. A housewife says: "My neighbor and I have had an argument as to whether cured pork should be kept in the refrigerator or out. Please tell us which is right."

The meat scientists say: It depends on how the pork is cured. The modern type of very mildly cured ham should be stored in the same way as fresh meat, in a refrigerator or other cold place. But strongly cured meat should be kept in a cool, dry, dark place screened away from insects.

The meat scientists also suggest a difference in preparing mildly cured and strongly cured meat. Mildly cured meat should not soak in water, for soaking draws out the juice and some of the flavor and food value. A mildly cured ham, for example, only needs wiping off with a clean cloth wrung out of cold water. But an old ham or strongly cured pork shoulder needs thorough scrubbing, and then may also need overnight soaking in water to remove some salt. Otherwise it will be too strong to the taste.

Let's go on to Question No. 3. A housewife writes: "You gave directions last week for canning and drying corn. Now please tell me how to preserve corn by salting."

The answer comes from the Montana State Experiment Station. Scientists there report that if you salt corn properly it keeps well and has a fine flavor, color, and texture. What's more, salted sweet corn holds its vitamin A well.

Here's the Montana recipe for salted corn: Remove husks from fresh sweet corn. Plunge the ears into boiling water, and cook 8 to 10 minutes. Cool the corn. Cut it from the cob. Weigh it. Then pack it in a stone jar using alternate layers of corn and dry salt. Use 1 part salt to 7 parts corn by weight. Over the corn place a

heavy weighted cover so the brine will come up to the surface. After 2 or 3 weeks, put the salted corn in clean glass jars and seal tightly.

Last question: "Can you give me a recipe for a relish made with red and green pepper, also cabbage and white onion?"

Answer: The home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture have a recipe for what they call "Dixie Relish" that contains red and green peppers, also cabbage and onion. Here are the ingredients for this Dixie Relish: .6 large sweet red peppers.....6 large sweet green peppers.....one-fourth cup of mustard seed.... .2 tablespoons celery seed.....2 cups of sugar.....one and a fourth cups salt..... 2 quarts of vinegar.....2 quarts of chopped cabbage.....and 1 quart of chopped white onions.

To make the relish you first cut the peppers in halves and discard the seeds and the coarse white sections. Then you soak the halves of peppers overnight in a brine made of 1 cup of salt to each 1 gallon of water. Freshen the peppers for an hour or two next morning. Then drain and chop. Mix the chopped cabbage and chopped white onion with the pepper, heat the spices with the sugar, the vinegar and the remaining one-fourth cup of salt to the boiling point. Pour this boiling mixture over the mixed chopped vegetables. Add more salt if necessary. Pack the relish in hot sterilized jars, partially seal, and process in a water bath for 15 minutes at simmering temperature--that is, 185 degrees Fahrenheit. Seal and store in a cool place.

That's all the questions for today. Listen for more on Thursday.

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