

# Preserving the Harvest

Written by Garden Inspirations • July 14, 2011



**Preserving your harvest**, until recently, was mostly conducted in the kitchens of farmers. The art of canning is starting to reappear in the local and sustainable communities. At Garden Inspirations we operate a CSA (community sustainable agriculture) and most of the vegetables harvested leave our farm and go to the dinner tables of our dedicated members. Our members have not only invested into our farm but a wholesome belief that the benefits of locally grown, pesticide free, and fresh picked vegetables are both tastier and healthier to consume. It is our hope that our members continue to move toward the slow food idealism.

Recently a gardening buddy called and said he had left several buckets of vegetables on the back porch because he thought we might enjoy them. What we found was a treasure of fresh goodness with his Armenian cucumbers, yellow squash, Patty Pan squash, and a few tomatoes. We quickly envisioned fresh sliced cucumbers for supper and while our dinner plates were beautifully prepared with the fresh food, we realized that we had more than a few meals worth of fresh vegetables. The decision came quick, that the overflowing buckets

of fresh vegetables would need to be preserved.

The garden harvest does not necessarily ripen at the gardener's convenience. Our members will often ask, "Cabbage again in our baskets?" which our reply is usually a chuckle and an educational response about the seasonal harvest. Our pantry must be ready to either freeze, dehydrate, hot bath, make jellies or pressure cook vegetables at any given moment. Vegetable gardening concepts are hard to grasp in our fast pace society and the gardening challenges include an urgency to preserve our bounty.

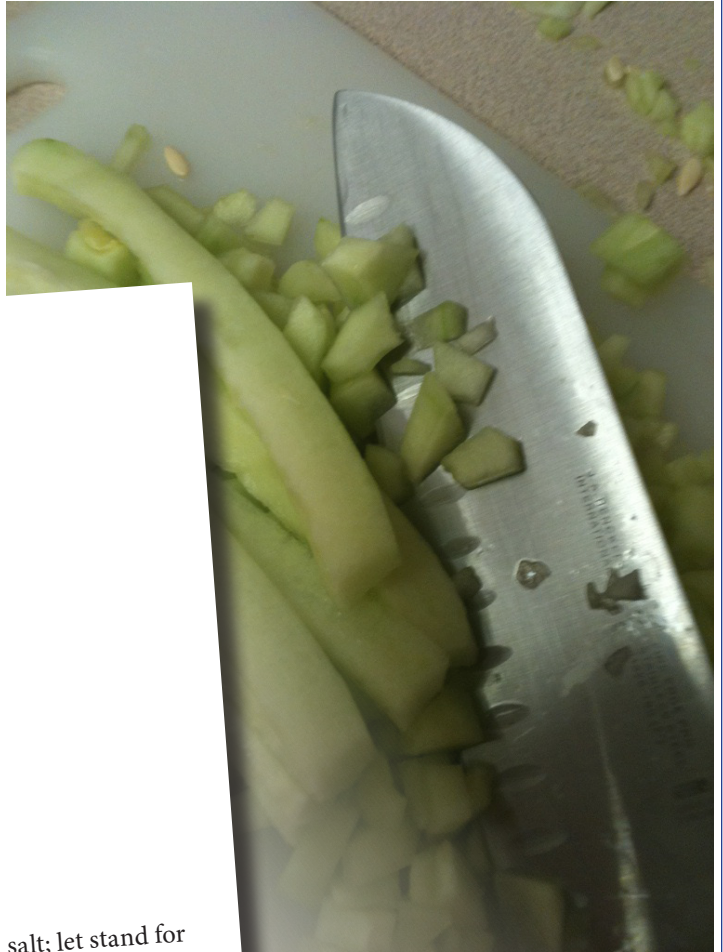
Since our back porch was a bountiful treasure of cucumbers, today we are going to write about preserving the cucumber harvest! The most popular way to preserve cucumbers is by making pickles, but the variety of cucumbers we have are Armenian cucumbers which are extra long so there is not a jar big enough to make whole dill pickles and besides the fact that the skin of this variety would not lend well to the pickling recipes. After some research, we discovered we could make a sweet relish with the Armenian cucumbers along with our pepper patch

from our own vegetable gardens. Canning is a tedious task and can take many hours, but once you call a friend or two to come help with the promise of taking home some canned goods, it goes by quickly. We called a friend (she discovered the sweet relish recipe last harvest season in *Preserving the Harvest*) to come over and chop alongside us while we prepared the sweet relish from our recent harvest. After a few hours of great conversations, chopping away on a cutting board, and planning our fall gardens we had reached the end of the preparation for the canning. As you will read in the recipe, after all the chopping of the cucumbers, red peppers, green peppers, and onions, the mixture must marinate in a vinegar and spice syrup for 24 hours. This was our stopping point for the afternoon, only to continue the next day.



This particular recipe was chosen for our two day preservation class because we want our members to understand that preserving the harvest will bring good wholesome food back to their tables when the vegetables crops are already out of season. We also want our members to have preservation knowledge that

includes not only knowing quick methods to canning but good things do come to those who go the distance. Our mission is to encourage members to garden and experience from their very own back yard, front porch or balcony with the pleasure of tasting the absolute best and most flavorful vegetables grown and preserved by their very own hands! Enjoy your harvest year round! Seize the season's bounty in a jar...below is the recipe.



The Big Book of *Preserving the Harvest*  
by Carol W. Costenbader

### Sweet Pickle Relish

Boiling-water-bath canner; nine 1 pint jars  
3 quarts cucumbers, scrubbed and chopped  
3 Cups green bell peppers, seeded and chopped  
3 Cups red bell peppers, seeded and chopped  
1 Cup onions, chopped  
8 cups water  
4 cups ice cubes  
¾ cup salt  
4 teaspoons ground turmeric  
4 teaspoons whole allspice  
4 teaspoons yellow mustard seeds  
1 tablespoon whole cloves  
6 cups distilled white vinegar  
2 cups sugar

1. In a 12-quart saucepan, combine the vegetables, water, ice, and salt; let stand for 4 hours. Drain and re-cover with fresh ice and water for 1 additional hour. Drain thoroughly.
2. Combine the spices in a cheesecloth bag. Place the spice bag, vinegar, and sugar in a nonreactive 4 -quart saucepan and heat to boiling.
3. Pour the vinegar syrup over the vegetables and refrigerate for 24 hours.
4. Heat the mixture to boiling and ladle into sterile jars, leaving ½ inch of head-space. Cap and seal.
5. Process for 10 minutes in a boiling-water-bath canner. Adjust for altitude if necessary.

**Note:** Before doing any canning involving hot bath or pressure cooking be sure to read up on safety methods from knowledgeable and experienced companies such as Kerr or Ball.

Garden Inspirations is a garden company with a mission to educate by providing a variety of vegetable garden classes that are offered in the gardens to our friends, neighbors, clients, and communities. [www.gardeninspirations-tx.com](http://www.gardeninspirations-tx.com) This article was written by the founder, Marilyn Simmons [marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com](mailto:marilyn@gardeninspirations-tx.com)