Congratulations to Kathy Vanderveen who won the Best Of Show award at the 2015 El Dorado County Fair for her Zucchini Relish!

Zucchini season is in full swing so we might as well find a way to use it. Many Master Food Preservers prefer making zucchini pickles and relishes over cucumber because we get a better textured product.

Kathy's award winning relish was based on the following recipe.

ZESTY ZUCCHINI RELISH
Makes about 5 (16 oz) pints

Horseradish and hot peppers give this relish its zest. It's a great way to use up extra zucchini from the garden, a

YOU WILL NEED:
12 cups finely chopped zucchini (about 12 medium)
4 cups chopped onions (about 3 medium)
2 red bell peppers, seeded and chopped
1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
⅓ cup pickling salt
2 ½ cups sugar
2 ½ cups white vinegar
1 Tbsp ground nutmeg
1 Tbsp ground turmeric
4 Tbsp prepared horseradish
1 chili pepper; including seeds, chopped

DIRECTIONS:

COMBINE zucchini, onions, red and green peppers and salt in a large glass or stainless steel bowl. Cover and let stand in a cool place (70 to 75°F) for 12 hours or overnight.
TRANSFER to a colander placed over a sink and drain. Rinse with cool water and drain thoroughly. Using your hands, squeeze out excess liquid.

COMBINE zucchini mixture, sugar, vinegar, nutmeg, turmeric, horseradish and chili pepper in a large stainless steel saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat and boil gently, stirring frequently, until liquid is reduced and mixture is the consistency of a thick commercial relish, about 45 minutes.

PREPARE boiling water canner. Heat jars in simmering water until ready for use. Do not boil. Wash lids in warm soapy water and set bands aside.

LADLE hot relish into hot jars leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace, if necessary, by adding hot relish. Wipe rim. Center lid on jar. Apply band until fit is fingertip tight.

PROCESS in a boiling water canner for 15 minutes, adjusting for altitude*. Remove jars and cool. Check lids for seal after 24 hours. Lid should not flex up and down when center is pressed.

Use this chart to adjust for your altitude:

Table 1. Recommended process time for **Dill Pickle Relish** in a boiling-water canner.				
		Process Time at Altitudes of		
Style of Pack	**Jar Size**	**0 – 1,000 ft**	**1,001 – 6,000 ft**	**Above 6,000 ft**
Hot	Pints	15 min	20	25

Tips for making a fair quality, Best Of Show, relish product:

When entering our products into a fair, only use clear jars. Part of the judging process is the way the product looks in the jar - nice color, clear brine, produce cut into uniform pieces. If the product is in a colored jar the judge cannot accurately judge the appearance of the product in the jar.

The fresher your produce, the better your product. It will taste better and the texture will be better.

Cut your produce in uniform pieces. A tool such as this onion chopper works great for this task.

Use fresh herbs and spices for best flavor. If using dried herbs, purchase new, fresh dried herbs and spices. Don't use those old ones from the far reaches of your spice cabinet.

Use whole spices when you can. Ground spices can cause the brine to be cloudy.

Feel free to flavor the relish to your personal taste. Like Tex-Mex flavors? Replace some of the spices listed in the original recipe. Maybe you don't care for horseradish, leave it out, replace it with some whole mustard seeds. Make it your own and then enter it in the fair.

Be sure to use canning salt. Table salt and some kosher salts contain anti-caking ingredients that can cloud your brine. If using kosher salt, check the ingredients on the box, then weigh it to insure you are using the correct amount of salt called for in the recipe. Kosher salt has larger grains than canning or table salt. Therefore, you will need more kosher salt than the recipe specifies.

Fill your jars exactly to the level required by your recipe. Nearly all relishes call for a headspace of ½". Fair judges take points off for under-filled or over-filled jars