



Fruit Relishes

Relishes are a delicious combination of chopped vegetables and/or fruits cooked in vinegar with spices added for flavor.

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Relishes are members of the pickle family and are relatively easy to make because the vinegar used to flavor them increases the acidity of the vegetables allowing them to be processed in the boiling water bath. It is important to **never** change the proportions of vinegar, food, or water in a recipe. Doing so can lower the acidity of the relish potentially causing a

foodborne illness. Always use scientifically tested recipes to make relishes.

Select appropriate ingredients for success.

- Use fresh produce for best results. Ideally, fruits and vegetables will be harvested less than 24 hours before making the relish.
- Ingredients for relishes should be chopped into uniform pieces for an attractive appearance.
- Besides its contribution to flavor, salt acts as a preservative and adds crispness by drawing juices and sugar from the vegetables. Use only canning or pickling salt.
- Use high quality vinegar with a five percent acidity level. Sometimes the vinegar is labeled as 50 grain. Mellow flavored cider vinegar is commonly used, but some

recipes call for white vinegar or other flavored vinegar. White vinegar should be used when color is important.

- Usually white cane or beet sugar is called for. Brown sugar, honey, and maple syrup are called for in recipes needing a more robust flavor. Only use a sugar substitute if you are using a recipe specifically designed for it. Sugar helps to firm the vegetables in a relish.
- Spices and herbs add to the flavor of the relishes. Most recipes call for whole fresh spices. Powdered and salted forms of spices and herbs may cloud the pickling mixture. Some recipes add the spices and herbs directly to pickling mixtures, but many recipes tell you to tie them in a spice bag, cheesecloth, or a coffee filter and hold them in the pickling solution to impart their flavor.
- Avoid using hard water. The minerals in hard water will react with the brine and affect the quality of the relish.

Measure Accurately

- Measure accurately so that you do not reduce the acidity level of the finished product.
- Do not add extra vegetables or reduce the amount of vinegar.
- Include adequate syrup. Relishes are canned by packing the hot product with the brined ingredients. Do not re-use left-over syrup in a second recipe of relish.

Work quickly to fill the jars with hot relish. Allow adequate headspace—usually $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Process the hot packed relish according to the recipe. It is not safe to just pour the hot relish into jars without processing it in a boiling water bath.

Fruit relishes are the ultimate in combining sweet and sour. [Oscar Relish](#) combines peaches with tomatoes, peppers, and onions in a sweet and sour syrup. Try this delicious relish over roast chicken, grilled fish or to top a turkey burger.