

Watermelon Pickles

Makes 7 half-pint jars

Buy a melon, cut it into pieces, and scoop out the melon into large chunks to serve to the kids and family for dessert. It always seems a shame to throw out the rinds—and now you don't have to!

When you cut the rind and peel off the green, leave a hint of the red flesh attached to make a prettier pickle. Watermelons are easier to weight than to measure, and this recipe calculates a general ratio so you can increase or decrease the amounts based on the size of your melon.



4 pounds watermelon peel (half a full watermelon)

2½ pounds sugar (5 cups)

4 cups apple cider vinegar

7 sticks cinnamons

1 tablespoon whole cloves

2 teaspoons allspice

Peel the green off the watermelon rind, and cut the rind into small strips or cubes. Weigh the rinds to make sure you have 4 pounds, or about 16 cups of cubed watermelon rind. In a large stainless steel bowl, soak overnight in cold water to cover. In the morning, drain, and transfer to a 4-quart stockpot; cover with water, and bring to a slow simmer over medium heat.

Cook until tender, but not soft, about 15 to 20 minutes. Drain in a colander and rinse with cold water. In the same stockpot, combine the vinegar, sugar, and spices (to make it easier to remove spices, wrap them in cheesecloth; otherwise, you have to spoon them out with a slotted spoon at the end). Place watermelon rinds back in the pot, bring to a simmer, and cook slowly until rinds are transparent, about 10 minutes. Don't overcook, because they will cook again in the hot water bath.

Meanwhile prepare 7 half-pint jars by sterilizing in boiling hot water or in the dishwasher. When ready to fill, place a cinnamon stick in each jar. Remove the spices, or leave them in the pickle brine; Wipe the rims clean with hot water, and place lids and seals. Turn upside down to vacuum pack. Place in hot water bath for another 10 minutes. Remove, cool, and label. Store in a cool, dark place for at least 3 months until crisp.