

Pickling Olives

There are many different recipes to pickle olives around. This one is suitable for green and for black olives.

If you are growing your own olives a few hints to timing the harvest:

Green olives: As they are ripening the colour will change from grassy green to a more yellow green. Some olives will already have a light purple blush. This is ideal. If picked too early they will retain quite a bit of bitterness.

Black Olives: Olives should be black all around. If cut in half, colour should penetrate about ½ way to the pip.

Of course they can also be pickled half green/ half black. Generally the texture of green olives is firmer, but they may retain some bitterness. Black olives are milder and softer.

You'll need:

- Clean jars with lids that seal
- Salt, plain table salt (make sure it is not iodised)
- Vinegar
- Water

Method:

- Make sure olives are fresh and are firm to touch.
- Cut skin 3 times along the olive and drop them into cold water.
- Leave olives in water for 1 – 3 days, changing water every day. (Green olives 3 days, black ones 1 day)
- Pack olives tightly into jars, fill up jars with water, tip water into measuring jug. That way you'll know how much brine to make.
- Add a little more water, as we'll need a bit of extra brine.
- The ratio of water to salt is 10:1. This means for every litre of water you'll need 100g of salt. Dissolve salt in water, add about 2% of vinegar (this is 20ml per 1 litre of brine).
- Fill up the jars with the olives and with brine, allow to stand for a while, to allow any air bubbles to escape. Top up brine if needed and close jars.
- Check after a few days, you may need to top up with brine.
- Don't get concerned as the pickling is underway the brine will seep out a bit, making the jars look rather messy.
- Keep olives in brine for at least 3 months, open a jar and try them. Once you open them there may be some scum on the surface. If it is a creamy white colour and the olives and brine smell pleasant it is yeast. That is a normal part of the fermentation and there is no concern. However if the scum looks grey and hairy and/or if the brine smells foul toss them out! Something has gone wrong with the fermentation.
- If you find the olives too bitter, close up and leave them in the brine a bit longer.
- Once you are happy with them they are ready to eat.
- Your olives will store best in the brine.

Serving suggestions:

- Replace about 1/3 of the brine with red wine vinegar for the traditional "Kalamata" taste.
- Marinate olives in olive oil with herbs, garlic, chilli, lemon etc.
- Olives are very tasty when warmed up in your special marinade.