

News Column for week of 9/11/17

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Safe Preserving: 'Sun' Pickles

The internet abounds with untested, and potentially unsafe, home-preservation recipes. A recent example is for 'Sun' Pickles. In the sun-pickle recipe, you fill a quart jar with cucumbers, add salt, and then fill with cold water. The lid is placed on the jar, and tightened, and the jar is allowed to sit in the sun each day until the water turns from clear (at the start) to cloudy (in the middle of the process) and then clear again (at the end). According to the recipe, when the water becomes clear again, the pickles are ready to use. This type of recipe is **not safe**. This particular recipe presents a risk of illness linked to three major foodborne pathogens: *E. coli* O157:H7, *Clostridium botulinum*, and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

This recipe is unsafe for the following reasons:

- The ratio of salt/water/cucumber is not defined. The precise ratio of these ingredients found in a tested recipe allows the good bacteria on the cucumbers to grow and produce acid (and a safe product), and prevents the pathogens (the harmful bacteria) from growing.
- The temperature inside a jar sitting in the sun could rise above 72°F, too high for proper fermentation. If the fermentation temperature is too high, the product will spoil or may become unsafe due to pathogen growth.

Rather than using a recipe that may be unsafe, use a tested recipe for safe, high quality results. You and your family are sure to enjoy homemade pickles made from recipes in the K-State Research & Extension publication *Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe Cucumbers*. This publication provides 11 tested recipes for cucumber pickles and relishes, including instructions on safely fermenting pickles and preserving them. This publication is available at no cost in any of the Southwind Extension offices. Other *Preserve it Fresh, Preserve it Safe* publications are also available in your extension office.

Questions about making pickles or other home-preserved goods can be directed to me by calling 620-365-2242 or by email at kmcewan@ksu.edu.

Treat your family to safe, healthy food prepared from recipes that have been tested for both quality and safety.