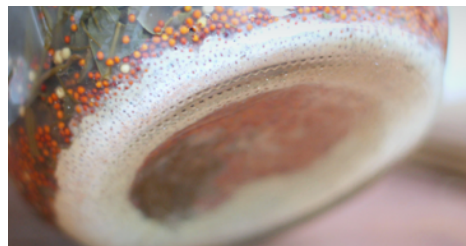


WHEN YOUR PICKLE IS IN A PICKLE:

Troubleshooting Pickling and Fermentation Problems



Problem	
Cause	Prevention

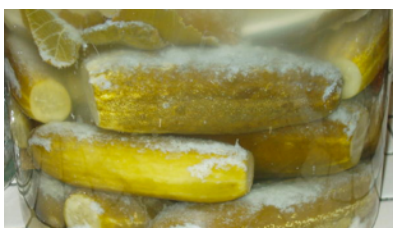


White sediment in jar	
Bacteria cause this during fermentation (fermentation only)	None
Salt contains an anti-caking agent or other additives	Use canning or pickling salt

Strong, bitter taste	
Spices cooked too long in vinegar, or too many spices used	Follow directions for amount of spices to use and the boiling time
Vinegar too strong	Use vinegar of the proper strength (5% acidity)
Dry weather	No prevention. Bitter taste is usually in the peel or skin of fruits and vegetables
Using salt substitutes	Potassium chloride, the ingredient in most of these, causes bitterness

Dark or discolored pickles (If brass, copper or zinc utensils and brining equipment were used, DO NOT use pickles.)	
Minerals in hard water	Use soft water
Ground spices used	Use whole spices
Spices left in jars of pickles	Place spices loosely in cheesecloth bag so they can be removed before canning
Brass, iron copper, or zinc utensils used	Use food-grade unchipped enamelware, glass, stainless steel, or stoneware utensils
Iodized salt used	Use canning or pickling salt

Shriveled Pickles	
Placing cucumbers in too strong brine, too heavy syrup, or too strong vinegar	Follow a reliable recipe. Use amounts of salt and sugar called for in a recipe, and vinegar that is 5% acidity
Long lapse of time between harvest and brining (fermentation only)	Brine (start fermentation) within 24 hours after harvesting cucumbers
Overcooking or overprocessing	Follow a reliable recipe exactly
Dry weather	No prevention. Bitter taste is usually in the peel or skin of fruits and vegetables



**Soft or slippery pickles
(if spoilage is evident, do not eat)**

Vinegar too weak (pickling only)	Use vinegar of at least 5% acidity.
Salt brine too weak during fermentation (fermentation only)	Maintain salt concentration specified in recipe
Cucumbers stored at too high a temperature during fermentation (fermentation only)	Store fermenting cucumbers between 70 and 75 F. This is the optimum temperature for growth of the organisms necessary for fermentation
Insufficient amount of brine	Keep cucumbers immersed in brine
Pickles not processed properly (to destroy microorganisms)	Process pickles in canner after filling jars
Moldy garlic or spices	Always use fresh spices
Blossom ends not removed from cucumbers	Slice at least 1/16th inch off blossom end of cucumbers and discard

**Scum on the brine surfaces while curing cucumbers
(fermentation only)**

Wild yeasts and bacteria feed on the acid thus reducing the concentration if allowed to accumulate	Remove scum as often as needed
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Spotted, dull, or faded color

Cucumbers not well cured (brined) (fermentation only)	Use brine of proper concentration. Complete fermentation process
Excessive exposure to light	Store processed jars in a dark, dry cool place
Cucumber of poor quality	Use produce of optimum quality, and grown under proper conditions (weather, soil, etc)

**Hollow Pickles
(fermentation only)**

Cucumbers too large for brining	Use smaller cucumbers for brining
Improper fermentation	Keep brine proper strength and the product well covered. Cure until fermentation is complete
Long lapse of time between harvest and brining	Fermentation process should be started within 24 hours after harvesting cucumbers
Growth defect of cucumber.	None. During washing, hollow cucumbers usually float. Remove and use for relishes instead of fermented pickles



This information was adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation and University of Georgia. For more information and recipes to follow, go to <http://nchfp.uga.edu>