

Dear son, I am delighted to pass on the recipe.

I have fond memories of my Texas grandmother's watermelon pickles, but this isn't her recipe. I got this from the Joy of Cooking but cut the sugar way down and spiced it up. It takes several days, but it's easy except for trimming the rind.

Day 1:

--Trim and cut up the rind of one large watermelon (cut off the dark-green outer skin; can leave just a little of the pinkish inner part but mostly the white fleshy rind). Try not to amputate any fingers in the process. A vegetable peeler or a really sharp paring knife is essential.
--Cover the cut-up rind with water in a large pot. Bring to a boil and simmer for just a few minutes. You want it barely semi-tender; easily pierced with a sharp fork or knife, but not limp. Drain.
--In a smaller pot, make the syrup: Mix 2 cups white vinegar, 3-4 cups sugar (Joy of C. calls for 7 cups but 3 is plenty), bring to a boil. Immediately pour it over the rind, and poke the pieces of rind down into the syrup so they're all covered. SPICES can be added now or later -- SEE BELOW
--Put on the lid and let the whole thing sit for a day, or at least overnight (not refrigerated; just leave it out on the stove or counter).

Day 2:

Drain the syrup off into a smaller pot; re-boil it, and pour it back over the rind. Let it sit another 24 hours.

Day 3:

Drain the syrup off again and re-boil it.
Pack the rind into glass jars. I like large jars, about a quart, but I guess any size would be ok. Pour the boiling syrup into the jars so the rind is all covered. Close them tightly and refrigerate. These aren't canned, strictly speaking, but they keep really well in the fridge, for a year or more.

SPICES: You can add spices at any point, into the syrup, or in the jars. Typically I boil a few hunks of ginger root in the syrup on day 1, and then put other spices in the jars on day 3, so each jar has a slightly different flavor. Use whole spices. Any or all of these:
ginger root -- at least an inch-long hunk (or several of them if you're into ginger) per large jar. You can peel it or not.
cinnamon -- a medium-sized stick in each jar is nice
cloves -- up to ten cloves per jar. Cloves can make the syrup darker (especially if you boil them) and can discolor the piece of rind they're squashed next to. I usually don't put them in every jar, even though I like the taste.
anise seed or fennel seed -- a teaspoonful, in the jars that don't have cloves.
allspice -- another nice option, mixes well with all the others.

There you go!

Enjoy! I'm all warm-fuzzy feeling at the thought of you making these. I haven't made any myself this year ...

Love,
C.