

HOW TO DISCO PICKLE!

by Cook First Portland
cookfirstpdx.org

This event is easy to replicate and scale up or down depending upon your audience and venue. You can stage one in your home, your office, in a school lunchroom, in your community garden, at your church, at a park—the possibilities are endless if you have a way to heat the brine. We'd love your feedback and ideas; be sure to tag your pictures with #discopickle.

While a guest chef is a great draw, you don't need an expert to Disco Pickle. Our farmers markets have a guest chef program in place that was easy to build upon. We would recommend setting up some type of demonstration area (mise en place, a place to gather and give a demo + ask questions before setting folks free, it sets everyone up for success and lowers barriers). Not all who watched our demo chopped and not all who chopped watched the demo, so we hit different audiences, which is nice. At the smaller, local market where we did not have the whole Chef in the Market set-up, our guest chef demonstrated from a 6-foot table with people gathered around. If you can also provide at least one slightly lower or adjustable table for children and those with disabilities, that's preferable. For reference you will find pictures on our [Facebook page](#).

We had 3-4 volunteers on hand at our events to give tips and encouragement throughout the pickling process. Typical questions included:

“Can I pickle this??”

“Can I mix this thing with this thing?”

“How much -- dill/cloves/garlic/etc—should I add?”

“What do I eat this with?”

We brined seasonal fruit and vegetables the week before and had samples and examples on hand for inspiration. Combining different produce became a big hit (i.e., purple cauliflower and red radishes) as people found their inner artist.

SAMPLING

Ideally you want to make some pickles ahead of time to sample, with the same brine you'll be making at the event and the same produce that will be on hand. Sampling allows you to connect with the future picklers and get them excited about shopping for their ingredients.

EQUIPMENT

- *Table + tablecloth*
- *signage explaining the event and what it is they're tasting-include some of the raw ingredients if possible; be sure to indicate that it's FREE*
- *cutting board and knife*
- *damp cloth*
- *plates or tray for samples*
- *toothpicks + trash bin*
- *bleach buckets or other cleaning solution should be nearby at pickling station for cleaning up sample utensils (see below)*
- *Recipes and instructions for those who cannot stay for the event; you can also post the recipe and ask people to take a picture of it, post it online, or send them to our website for the how-to video!*

INGREDIENTS

To fill two pint jars:

- 1 pound vegetables
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 T salt
- 1T sugar

Scale up based upon your estimated attendance. These ingredients are inexpensive and more brine is easy to whip up, so err on the side of more. We have the recipes that we used ready to download and print; feel free to use those.

Aromatics:

Items you can try to source from the farmers market:

- garlic
- ginger
- turmeric
- rosemary, thyme, fennel, dill, etc.

Other aromatics to try:

- cinnamon sticks
- star anise
- cloves
- peppercorns
- chili flakes
- seeds like mustard, caraway, coriander, celery, dill, etc.

THE DIY TOOL SETUP

- first aid kit with basics for knife cuts, just in case
- cutting boards
- Chef knives
- peelers
- apple corers (optional but helpful)
- chopsticks (to push herbs and aromatics down into the jars)
- clean water source for rinsing produce
- colanders for people to wash their produce in, set over a large bucket or drain
- large pot for making brine
- measuring tools for salt and sugar
- fresh water for brine
- 1 ladle that will easily pour over the mouths of the jars you provide
- potholder or towel for handling pot
- compost bucket(s) for work table for people's scraps
- *2 additional buckets - one for bleach water and one for soapy water*
- *bleach and the tester strips to make sure it is the right concentration*
- hand wash station
- dish towels and sponges, disinfectant wipes
- Some type of portable stove for heating the brine. *You need to get it to a full boil so try to start with water that isn't super cold, or start your brine liquid ahead of the demo so it's ready to go.*

Clean, dry, jars with lids. We had several cases of washed pint jars on hand and asked for a \$1 donation per jar. See images. Labels are nice but not necessary. You can also provide labels and/or grease pencils for people to make their own.

There will be knives and hot brine: consider a safety rider. We had people sign off on the rider to receive a jar. Ours also served as a photo release, which is recommended for non-profit events/public gatherings.

***DISCO MUSIC* (disco ball optional)**

What we would do next time:

Get the farmers more involved; let them know in advance about the event and possibly provide them with some type of sticker or sign to indicate what they have that would be good to pickle. If market chefs are doing the presentation have flyers at their booths for a week or two in advance of the event. Have a list/map of participating farms to hand out at the sampling booth.

*Something like “Look for the **You Can Pickle This** sign at these vendors.”*

Make it more apparent that the event is FREE. The sampling booth should have signage that makes it very clear that we aren't selling anything. Samples are for education, not a sales pitch. Flyers and PR should emphasize free tasting, free demo, free pickling station and aromatics with a suggested jar donation or BYOJ. Add “bring your own jar” to the PR and flyers.

Shorten the shopping time and extend the pickling time. Have samples during the pickling event. We found that a lot of early-market customers couldn't stay until the chef presentation. Once we started gathering at the pickling station and blasting the disco we attracted a lot of end-of-market customers.

Please let us know how your event turned out and tag us if you want us to publicize your event in advance. We're on

Facebook: @cookfirstportland

Twitter and Instagram: @cookfirstpdx