

Vinegar with 5% Acidity: It Matters

Cucumbers are in season and it's time to make pickles! Vinegar is a key flavor component in home-preserved pickles, salsa and other acidified foods and is critical for food safety too. Research-tested recipes specify vinegar with 5% acidity. For example, a USDA-tested family favorite recipe for [Bread and Butter Pickles](#) includes cucumbers and onions in a brine of vinegar (5 percent) and sugar, along spices.

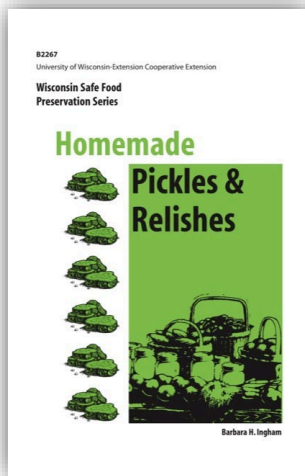


Why is the acidity of vinegar important? White and cider vinegars acceptable for home preserving are standardized to 5% acidity. But, increasingly, store brands of vinegar are available with 4% acidity. Be sure to read the label! If you choose a vinegar with 4% or lower acidity, it may not be strong enough to safely preserve food.

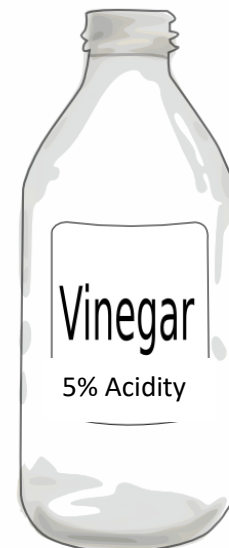
What about other types of vinegar? Wine vinegars with 3 – 6% acidity should not be used in home preserving; safe recipes have not been developed. Other types of vinegars may have 6% acidity, or higher, but these vinegars are intended as household cleaners and should not be used in cooking or preserving.

Vinegar plays a critical role in safe home canning. Together with heat processing, the amount and type of vinegar are critical for controlling harmful pathogens. Recipes from the National Center for Home Food Preservation and Extension sources have been research-tested to ensure both safety and quality.

A booklet in the Wisconsin Safe Food Preservation Series [Homemade Pickles and Relishes](#) contains research-tested recipes to guide you in safely preserving the bounty of the season.



CAUTION: Use only 5% acetic acid vinegar in home canning.



Sources:

Homemade Pickles and Relishes (Division of Extension Learning Store)
<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/B2267.pdf>

National Center for Home Food Preservation <https://nchfp.uga.edu> (USDA tested recipes)