

# Pickle me this: Los Osos culinary craftswomen prove that you truly can pickle anything

BY HAYLEY THOMAS CAIN

Spin the globe and pick a place. Yep. They've got pickles. From funky kimchi in South Korea to umami-packed pickled herring in Sweden to sauerkraut in Germany and pickled mango in India, every culture has found a way to spice, salt, brine, and transform their favorite foods into long-lasting, flavorful pickled versions of boring old produce. You could call it a universal pastime.

Don't think you can afford the time to pickle? Los Osos locals and Connoisseur Creations Inc. owners Andrea Wasko and Meaghan Gilbert think you can't afford not to. Meet your enthusiastic guides to creating quick, simple, and natural fresh pickles in a pinch—and I mean just three days' time.

“Traditional canning requires you to boil the jars and boil the brine and let it sit for a month—or in my family's case, three to six months—before enjoying the pickles,” Wasko said. “We actually took a class at UC Davis, did our research, and found food scientists to help us create the Quick Pickle Kit. The end result is a product that delivers a safe, quick pickle that stays crunchy.”

Crisp. Crunchy. Snappy. That's what you really want from a good pickle. But why are so many supermarket cukes flabby and blah? According to Wasko, they're over processed. This doesn't just translate into a lackluster mouthfeel, it also drains the pickle of gut-loving probiotics. Why not do it yourself?

Yes, pickling and other home DIY culinary crafts (kombucha brewing, bread baking, urban farming) are totally on-trend right now, but Wasko and Gilbert hit the scene way before the famous “We can pickle that” *Portlandia* episode was but a gleam in Carrie Brownstein's eye.

Two factors came together to create the Quick Pickle Kit: One, Wasko's upbringing (her mother, Georgianna, had been canning and pickling since 1950). The other? As is true with so many entrepreneurial tales, corporate burnout birthed a brand new venture. The year was 1996 when, as Wasko said, “I came into work one day and just said I don't want to wear a suit and high heels anymore.”



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PHOTO COURTESY OF QUICK PICKLE KIT

PICKLE THE RAINBOW: Pickle lackluster looking produce and you'll use up excess food, help the environment, and please your tastebuds.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF QUICK PICKLE KIT  
SALTY GAL'S: Connoisseur Creations President Andrea Wasko and Vice-President Meaghan Gilbert show off the powers of their Quick Pickle Kit.

After quitting her job and finishing graduate school with an MBA, Wasko gathered up the perfect team of badass lady bosses.

“I had a friend with a great financial background, then there was Meaghan, who had a great operational background, and my mother, who had great recipes,” Wasko said. “Being from Pennsylvania and growing up pickling, I could not find a pickle in California that was crunchy and tasted really good. So, I got this idea to create a kit to help people make their own crispy, crunchy, simple, and all-natural pickles.”

The idea was born. Then came everything else.

Wasko said she knew nothing about the food industry when she started. Her team had to fight tooth and nail to learn everything from product development to food safety testing, packaging design, manufacturing, the works. Part of the success of the product is in its simplicity. Each kit comes with a recipe book, reusable jar, reusable gasket, and seasoning packets. It's pretty much “pickling for dummies.”

Plus, you don't even have to rush out to the store to buy veggies. Wasko and Gilbert know that when summer heats up, so does your own surplus of backyard produce, farmers' market hauls, and CSA box offerings.

“We're leading the movement in ‘pickling the ugly ones,’” Wasko said. “When you pickle, you turn something that isn't as attractive into something that's good tasting and good for you.”

You can literally pickle anything, so experiment, play, and get creative. Remember: Bloody marys beg for pickled Brussels sprouts, carrots, green beans—the spicier the better!

“We just got back from Japan and they have pickled everything. It's just so fascinating how very culture has their own way,” Wasko said. “When people think ‘pickle’ they feel it's synonymous with cucumbers, but we've even had a diver pickle his own kelp.”

That's right. There is no wrong way to pickle. So, before tossing that less-than-pretty beet in the compost, ask yourself a quick question.

“Hey. Can I pickle that?”

Hint: The answer to that question is always, “Oh, hell yes.”

QUICK! PICKLE IT!: For more information on the Quick Pickle Kit, visit [quickpicklekit.com](http://quickpicklekit.com). You can also pick up your own kit locally at SLO Natural Foods Co-Op, Sunshine Health Foods, Vivant Fine Cheese, Nature's Touch, Carla's Country Kitchen & Gift Shop, Higgie's World BBQ, and Windfall Farms.

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