

Beach Assembly's Refrigerated Pickling Contest

Official Contest Rules & Guidelines

Key Contest Information

- **Date & Location:** Saturday, September 21st, at the FFA Campground in North Myrtle Beach.
- **Registration:** Sign up for the contest at the Family and Friends Day table in the foyer (across from the men's restroom).
- **Drop-off Time:** All entries must be dropped off between **12:30 PM and 12:45 PM** sharp located in FFA's cafeteria look for signs for drop off Paige Drake will be your host to get you registered and things ready for the judges.
- **Please keep your entry anonymous** to ensure honest voting for the People's Choice Award. Your discretion is highly advised.
- **Judging:** Judging begins promptly at 1:00 PM. Winners will be announced before 2:00 PM.
- **Prizes:**
 - An overall **Bragging Rights Trophy** for the Grand Champion.
 - A permanent **People's Choice Award** trophy.
 - Additional prizes, such as ribbons for top participants.

Entry Requirements

- **Entry Limit:** Each contestant may submit a **maximum of one entry**.
- **Jar Size:** The minimum jar size is a **quart**. You must bring **two (2) quart-sized Mason-type jars** for your entry: one for the judges' evaluation and one for the People's Choice Award tasting.
- **Pickle Types:** Any type of refrigerated pickle is welcome, including dill, sweet, bread-and-butter, fruit, or any other variety.
- **No Commercial Products:** **Commercial jars, brines, or mixes are not allowed.** All entries must be homemade.
- **Allergen Labeling:** For the safety of the judges and tasters, please write any potential allergens (e.g., nuts, gluten) on a label and place it on the back of each jar.
- **Entries Become Contest Property:** Once submitted, all entries become the property of the contest organizers.
- **Final Decision:** All judges' decisions are final.

Your Preparation Timeline

To ensure fairness, all entries must be freshly prepared. You can begin preparing your pickled entry no earlier than **72 hours (3 days)** before the contest drop-off time. This means you can

begin your pickling process on or after **Wednesday, September 18th**.

Defining "Refrigerated Pickling"

For this contest, "refrigerated pickling" refers to **quick pickles** or **fresh-pack pickles**. Unlike shelf-stable canned goods, these are preserved with an acidic vinegar brine and require **continuous refrigeration** for safety. This is a crucial rule—refrigeration isn't just for quality; it's the primary safety mechanism.

The Most Important Rule: Food Safety

Safety is the absolute priority. Entries showing any signs of spoilage will be immediately disqualified.

- **Vinegar Acidity:** You **must use vinegar with a standardized 5% acidity**.
- **Vinegar-to-Liquid Ratio:** Your pickling brine must contain at least a **1:1 ratio of vinegar (5% acidity) to other liquids**.
- **Do Not Alter Recipes:** **Do not change the proportions** of vinegar, food, or water from your recipe. Small changes can make your pickles unsafe.
- **Adjusting Flavor Safely:** If you want a sweeter pickle, **add more sugar or sweetener**—never dilute the vinegar with more water.

Your Pickling Checklist

Ingredients & Preparation

- **Fresh Produce:** Use only fresh, firm, and blemish-free fruits or vegetables.
- **Wash Thoroughly:** All produce must be meticulously washed.
- **Cucumbers:** Cut off and discard the blossom end of cucumbers to prevent them from becoming soft.
- **Salt:** Use **canning or pickling salt**. Avoid sea salt or iodized salt, as they can cause discoloration or cloudiness.

Jar & Pack

- **Jar Type:** Use clear, quart-sized Mason-type jars.
- **Lids:** Both jars must have a new, two-piece metal canning lid and band.
- **Headspace:** Leave the recommended headspace at the top of the jar (typically 1/2 to 1 inch).
- **Full Coverage:** The pickling liquid **must completely cover** all the produce in the jar.
- **Sealing:** A vacuum seal is **not required** for refrigerated pickles. Judges will open the jars themselves for evaluation.

Transport & Drop-off

- **Continuous Cold Chain:** Your entries must be kept cold from the moment they are prepared until they are dropped off.
- **Safe Transport:** Transport your jars in insulated **coolers** packed with plenty of ice or ice packs to maintain the needed refrigeration temperature.

- **Anonymous Judging:** Do not put any identifying labels on your jars. The contest staff will give you a number to ensure anonymous judging.

Judging Criteria

Your entry will be judged on a 100-point scale based on the following criteria.

- **Safety (Mandatory Pass/Fail):** An initial inspection for a bulging lid, unusual colors, off-odors, or any other sign of spoilage.
- **Appearance (25 points):** The quality, color, and uniformity of your produce pieces, along with the clarity of the liquid.
- **Pack (15 points):** The balance between your solids and liquids, density of the pack, and correct headspace.
- **Texture (20 points):** The desired firmness and crispness of your pickled produce.
- **Flavor (20 points):** A harmonious balance of sour, sweet, salt, and spices.

The second jar will be used for public sampling, and votes will determine the **People's Choice Award** winner.

Tips for a Winning Entry

- **Focus on the Foundation:** Use the freshest, most high-quality ingredients you can find.
- **Perfect the Pack:** Arrange your produce neatly in the jar to show off your hard work.
- **Balance Your Flavors:** Aim for a harmonious taste—no single flavor should overpower the others.
- **Practice Makes Perfect:** Consider a trial batch to fine-tune your recipe and technique before the contest.

We look forward to seeing your family's prized creations! Good luck, and happy pickling.