

# How To Make Chutney

Contributed by gbst

A basic guide and some recipes

A seasonal glut of fruit and vegetables?  
 The last of the summer's fruit that isn't going to ripen properly?  
 Done enough freezing, bottling, and jam-making till next year?  
 Not really into sweet stuff like jam?  
 Only got small quantities of a mixture of fruit and veg?  
 Need something different to give folk as presents?

The downsizer's answer to these is CHUTNEY (and other similar things, such as relishes).

The basic idea behind chutney is to preserve fruit and vegetables in a mixture of sugar and vinegar, cooked until thickened, and stored in airtight jars. There is no need to reach a 'setting point' (as there is with jam and jelly). Knowing when you have cooked the chutney sufficiently is also much easier than it is for jam. All the hard work involves chopping up the fruit and veg beforehand into small dice or chunks. So making chutney is far more foolproof than jam. And you can make it in all kinds of interesting flavours and combinations.

## Basic Equipment

Knife and chopping board(s)

Large saucepan / stockpot (lid not required) &ndash; avoid copper, brass or iron pans because the acidity of the vinegar

Wooden spoon

(sometimes) Muslin or jelly bag for boiling up whole spices and easily removing afterwards. A white cotton hanky will do.

Ladle, for getting chutney out of pan into jug

Gravy boat, jug or anything with wide spout for potting chutney neatly

Clean, warm jars (12oz jars are a good size).

\*\*Do not use jars with plain metal lids (for example, some honey jars), as the vinegar will corrode them. Ordinary jar lids with that rubbery, plasticised interior that gives an airtight seal are what is needed.

## Basic Method

1. Set the clean jars to warm in a low oven (100C or below).
2. Chop the fruit and veg into small dice / chunks / pieces (though really squishy stuff, such as tomatoes and plums can be halved or quartered and then cooked down)
3. Put the fruit and veg into the pan with the vinegar and sugar, along with any dried fruit, such as raisins or sultanas, and the spices, stir till sugar is dissolved, and simmer gently till fruit and veg are soft
4. Cook gently without a lid on the pan, till you can draw a wooden spoon through the mixture and the furrow does not immediately fill back up again with liquid. Do not allow to boil, and stir frequently, or the bits will sink to the bottom and burn onto the pan. Burnt black bits are not a good addition. This may take 2 or more hours.
5. Pot into warm, clean jars and put the lids on straightaway (or when the chutney is completely cold)
6. Label your chutney with its name and the date made.
7. Store for 3 months before eating, to allow flavours to blend.

## Notes and confessions

Stage 4 : This can take quite a while if the mix is runny and the cook is cautious. You could try not adding quite all the vinegar until nearer the end, or even use a bit less if your fruit is particularly juicy.

The last batch of chutney I made took me 7 (yes, seven) hours to cook to potting point. On far too low a heat, let it be said. This palaver ended up being spread out over 3 (yes, three) evenings. However, as far as I know, the end result is palatable.

There was also the time I forgot that the furrow only needs not to fill immediately after the spoon : so I cooked the chutney till it was nearly solid.

Sometimes my chutney has burnt black bits in&hellip;..

Stage 5 : When potting into jars, make sure there are no air spaces in the chutney, as this impairs its keeping qualities. Get rid of them by using something like a blunt-ended knife or wooden ice-lolly stick to stir / prod them out.

#### Yields

Yields vary, and recipes sometimes don't say how much you will end up with. Expect to need about 8 &ndash; 12 jars per batch unless otherwise stated.

#### Storage

If you can, keep for three months before eating to allow the flavours to blend, and the edge of the vinegar to mellow. Store in a cool, dark, dry place. Probably best kept in the fridge after opening.

#### General Ingredients

Chutney usually involves the following :

#### Onions

Part of the basic vegetable background of chutney. A few cloves of garlic can also be added if wished.

#### Fruit and / or vegetables

This will be your main ingredient(s), plus some other bits to add variety of texture / colour / taste. The main fruit/veg often cooks down to something soft of a red, brown or purple colour (e.g apple, plum, pear, tomato, damson, with ground spices), and you can then add something with a bit more crunch, such as carrot or celery, and perhaps in a contrasting colour (red or green peppers).

#### Dried fruit, if wished

Some folk don't like it in chutney &ndash; you can omit it from a recipe, and substitute the equivalent weight of fruit / veg.

#### Spices

Recipes vary widely in how much spice to add, ranging from the pusillanimous ('¼ teaspoon cayenne + ¼ teaspoon ginger' &ndash; in a whole batch of chutney !) to the more robust (2 teaspoons each of 4 spices). How much depends on your tastes, or those of the intended recipients of your produce. And as with general cooking, if you like chilli, garlic and ginger, there is no reason why you couldn't add these to any of the recipes below, in whatever quantities please your tastebuds. On the one hand, I sometimes like a less spicy chutney as an accompaniment to curry; on the other, I find a dollop of spicy chutney livens up a sometimes rather bland rice and veg meal.

#### Sugar

Whether you use white or brown depends on the recipe, your taste, and how dark you want the end result to be. White is blander and does not add colour, so allows more delicate flavours and colours to come through. So your chutneys don't all end up looking like B\*\*\*\*\*.

#### Vinegar

I tend to use distilled malt vinegar &ndash; the clear stuff, which lets the taste of the chutney come through better than the brown malt vinegar for putting on chips. I wouldn't use balsamic or any other flavoured vinegar either, because it would overwhelm the fruit and veg flavours. Spiced pickling vinegar is a waste of time if you're going to spice the chutney yourself. However, it depends what is available and in what quantities it is sold.

#### [salt]

Most or all recipes for chutney include salt, in quantities ranging from the moderate to the horrifying. The inclusion of salt is a matter of taste. It appears to have no impact on the

keeping qualities of the final product, and I omit it completely when I make chutney. I've just opened my last jar of saltless Plum and Pear 2002, and it is fine. Some of the recipes given here include salt, but it is totally optional.

Some recipes to get you started (please contribute more, these are fairly standard)

### 1. Plum and Apple Chutney

Ingredients :

1lb onions (chopped up fine)

3lb plums (halved and stoned)

1lb cooking or dessert apples (peeled, cored and chopped)

½ lb carrots (small dice)

2 teaspoons each of ground cloves, cinnamon, ginger and allspice

1lb sugar

1 ¾ pints vinegar

[1oz salt] gasp! No, no, don't do it ! This recipe works fine without any at all.

Follow the basic method above :

1. Set the jars to warm in low oven
2. Chop up the fruit and veg into small pieces
3. Put in the pan, together with vinegar, sugar and spices, stir till sugar dissolves, and cook gently till soft (but not a total mush)
4. Simmer till the furrow left by a spoon drawn across the surface does not refill with liquid immediately. This may take 2 or more hours.

This is one of the basic recipes I use, and you can improvise or substitute to make different, but similar versions. I also tend to mix and match it with the one following, depending on what ingredients I've got. So, for instance, you could try :

- a) substituting damsons for plums
- b) ditto pears for apples
- c) ditto tomatoes for apples
- d) going for 2lb each of plums and pears (the softish stuff)
- e) celery instead of carrots
- f) adding a small diced red or green pepper
- g) different spices (e.g. cayenne instead of cloves)

### 2. Plum Chutney (sweeter than the version above)

Ingredients:

1lb onions (chopped small)

3lb plums (halved and stoned)

1lb tomatoes (quartered)

½ lb celery (chopped small and thinnish)

½ lb raisins

¼ teaspoon cayenne and ¼ teaspoon ginger (or to taste)

1 ½ lb Demerara sugar

1 ¾ pints vinegar

[2 teaspoons salt] &ndash; optional

Method : the usual, as above.

Again, you can mix and match the fruit and veg.

### 3. Dower House Chutney (yet more plums)

Ingredients:

1 ½ lb plums (halved and stoned)

2 lb tomatoes (skinned and sliced, or just sliced if you're not fussy about skins)

4 garlic cloves

¾ lb onions

2 ¼ lb apples

½ dried fruit

1 ½ tablespoons of pickling spice (left whole and simmered in a muslin bag hung over the side of the pan)  
 1lb Demerara sugar  
 1 ½ pints malt vinegar  
 [4 teaspoons of salt] &ndash; optional

Method : as above

#### 4. Shropshire Apple Chutney (look, no plums !)

A good basic to make with a glut of apples. Could also be made with pears, or a mixture.

##### Ingredients:

1 ½ lb onions  
 4 ½ lb apples, peeled and cored  
 1 ½ lb raisins or sultanas  
 1oz ground ginger  
 ½ oz crushed garlic  
 1oz mustard seed  
 ¼ oz cayenne pepper  
 2 pints malt vinegar  
 2 lb soft brown sugar

##### Method

1. Set jars to warm in low oven
2. Cut apples into small pieces, put in pan with onions, sugar and vinegar
3. Simmer until pulpy
4. Add remaining ingredients, simmer till thick (original recipe says for 10 minutes or more, which seems optimistic)
5. Pot into warm jars, put lids on, leave to cool, label and store.

Yield : 5-6lbs

#### 5. Green Tomato Chutney I

Something to do with those end-of-season tomatoes that just won't turn red.

##### Ingredients:

1lb onions  
 1lb apples  
 1lb marrow  
 3lb green tomatoes  
 4oz dates  
 ½ lb raisins or sultanas  
 2lb soft brown sugar  
 1 ½ pints malt vinegar  
 ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
 1oz root ginger  
 1oz mustard seeds

##### Method

1. Cut tomatoes into small pieces
2. Peel, core and chop the apples
3. Peel marrow, remove seeds, chop flesh into small cubes
4. Chop onions finely
5. Chop dates finely
6. Put fruit, veg, dried fruit, cayenne, sugar and vinegar into pan
7. Bruise the root ginger, put it in a muslin or jelly bag with the mustard seeds, and hang the bag over the edge of the pan
8. Stir at gentle heat to dissolve sugar
9. Simmer for about 2hrs till thick
10. Remove muslin bag and squeeze juice into mix
11. Stir the mustard seeds into the chutney, if liked
12. Pot, lid, cool, label

Yield : Probably about 6lb, but don't quote me on this.

6. Green Tomato Chutney II (makes a smaller quantity than I, and contains no sugar, thick but still pourable)

Ingredients:

2 large onions, finely chopped  
 2 large eating apples, peeled, cored and chopped  
 2lb green tomatoes, cut up  
 4oz raisins  
 1 ½ heaped tablespoons of pickling spice  
 1 pint cider or malt vinegar  
 1 tablespoon ground ginger  
 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
 [1 tablespoon salt] &ndash; optional

Method

1. Tie up spices in a muslin bag
2. Put all ingredients except vinegar into pan
3. Add half the vinegar, simmer gently till tender
4. Lift out spice bag and squeeze well into mix
5. Add rest of vinegar, and cook till thick
6. Pour into jars, lid, cool and label.

7. Marrow and Red Tomato Chutney

Here's one to make when you do have a glut of ripe, red tomatoes

Ingredients:

1lb marrow (weight after peeling and removing seeds)  
 1lb ripe tomatoes  
 8oz onions  
 1 clove garlic  
 8oz sultanas  
 1 tablespoon pickling spice  
 1 teaspoon ground ginger  
 6oz white sugar  
 6oz brown sugar  
 ½ pint malt vinegar  
 [2 teaspoons salt] - optional

Method

1. Set jars to warm in low oven
2. Cut marrow into small cubes, skin tomatoes and chop roughly, peel and chop onion finely, crush garlic
3. Tie pickling spice up in muslin
4. Put all ingredients in pan, stir over low heat till sugar has dissolved.
5. Simmer, stirring, until mixture is thick (about 1 hour)
6. Pot into jars, lid, cool and label.

Yield : about 4lb

8. Cucumber Relish I (sweet version)

This one's for you if you've got a thing about that green B\*\*\*'s (burger) relish. The homemade version, and perhaps even nicer.

Additional equipment

Dish / bowl / colander  
 Clean teatowel / kitchen roll  
 Slotted spoon

Ingredients:

4lb cucumbers (when the weather unexpectedly turns cold in summer, your local

supermarket will sometimes have these reduced for quick sale)

2 medium onions

3 inner sticks celery

2 small peppers, 1 red, 1 green

1oz mustard seed

¾ pint white vinegar

12oz white sugar

loadsa salt (for extracting excess water from cukes &ndash; NOT optional, but you rinse it off thoroughly after)

#### Method

1. Set clean jars to warm in low oven
2. Wash cucumbers, peel only if skin is blemished or very tough, slice, and then cut the slices into small dice / squares; put on large dish with a rim, or in a colander over a bowl, and layer / cover with lots of salt, and leave for 1-2 hours.
3. Rinse the salt off thoroughly, and pat cukes dry with teatowel / kitchen roll
4. Chop onions finely, slice celery finely, dice the peppers
5. Put veg into pan with mustard seeds and vinegar and bring to the boil.
6. Add sugar, stir till dissolved, simmer gently till cooked but still crisp
7. Lift the solids out of the pan with a slotted spoon, and distribute between jars to almost fill
8. Boil remaining liquid until reduced by half
9. Pour into jars, filling to the top
10. Put lids on, leave to cool, label.

#### 9. Cucumber Relish II (less sweet)

##### Ingredients:

3 cucumbers

4 onions

1 pint white vinegar

6oz white sugar

1 teaspoon celery seed

1 teaspoon mustard seed

loadsa salt

##### Method

As for Cucumber Relish I.

#### Note

After experimenting with both these cucumber recipes, I've arrived at a mixture of the two, using mainly the first recipe, but with ½ oz mustard seed and ½ oz celery seed.

#### 10. Elderberry Chutney

One to make when you've been foraging.

##### Ingredients:

2 pints elderberries

4oz raisins

4oz Demerara sugar

2oz onions

'a pinch of' cayenne pepper

'a pinch of' allspice

1 pint cider vinegar or malt vinegar

##### Method

1. Wash berries, if necessary, and remove from stalks with a fork
2. Put all ingredients in the pan, heat gently and stir till sugar is dissolved
3. Cook till fruit and veg are soft, and the mix thickens. Chutney is done when you can draw a wooden spoon across the surface and the furrow does not immediately fill back up with liquid
4. Pot into jars, put lids on, leave to cool, label.
5. Store for 3 months before use.

Yield : about 1½lb

### 11. Beetroot Chutney

A good one for autumn, when you've lifted the last lot of beetroot, before the frosts kick in.

#### Ingredients:

3lb boiled beetroot  
1lb apples  
8oz dates or sultanas  
2 large onions  
½ teaspoon ginger  
½ teaspoon mixed spice  
8oz Demerara sugar  
1 pint vinegar

Mustard seed is also a good addition to this chutney.

I suspect that horseradish would be good too, since it goes well with beetroot.

#### Method

1. Chop apple and onion finely, place in pan with sugar, dried fruit and vinegar, and cook for 20 minutes (gently at first till sugar dissolves)
2. Dice beetroot into small pieces, and add to mix.
3. Cook till thickened
4. Pot into jars, put lids on, leave to cool, label and store.