

Curing Green Olives

Salt Brine Cure



Agenda

- Background/Why I Cure Olives
- Green Olive Curing Methods
- Olive Curing Process
 - Soaking/Splitting
 - Salt Brine
 - Canning
- When are they Ready?
- Curing Recipes & Additional Information

Background

- Olive trees have been cultivated for 6000 years
- Originated in the Middle East; most of world's production centers on Mediterranean
- Olives also grown in Mediterranean-type climates: California, Australia, and Chile (but not Albuquerque NM, where I live ☹)
- Green and black olives are from the same tree, they are just picked at different times

Why I Cure Olives

- The process of turning something inedible into something good
- Maintaining a time-honored family tradition (my grandfather and best friends' grandfather cured barrels & barrels of olives)
- The smiles it brings to the faces of relatives and friends. The warning below (on an olive curing page) was written in jest, but quite true (demand for my olives always exceeds the supply).

WARNING!

Don't give any of your olives to you olive eating friends to taste or you might finish up with more friends than olives! Tell them to buy themselves a tree - or better still, set up a whole olive grove.

Green Olive Curing Methods

- **Salt Brine Cure** [what I do; is discussed here]
 - Soaked in water to remove bitterness then put in salt brine
 - Water used to remove bitterness can be “repurposed” for secondary uses (I use it to irrigate my fruit trees, lilacs, etc.)
 - More work, takes a longer time than Lye cured olives
- **Lye Cure** [did it once; not discussed here]
 - Soaked in Lye to remove bitterness. Lye been used for this since Ancient Roman times and is safe if done properly, but I think it removes too much flavor
 - Water from rinses needs to be dumped down drain (I live in the desert and hate to waste water)
 - Takes less time than Salt Brine cured olives

Olive Curing Process

1. Acquiring Raw Olives
2. Olive Curing Equipment
3. Splitting/Soaking the Olives
4. Making Salt Brine
5. Canning Olives

Note: The views and opinions expressed in this presentation reflect general consensus and available information, without any implied warranties.

Acquiring Raw Olives

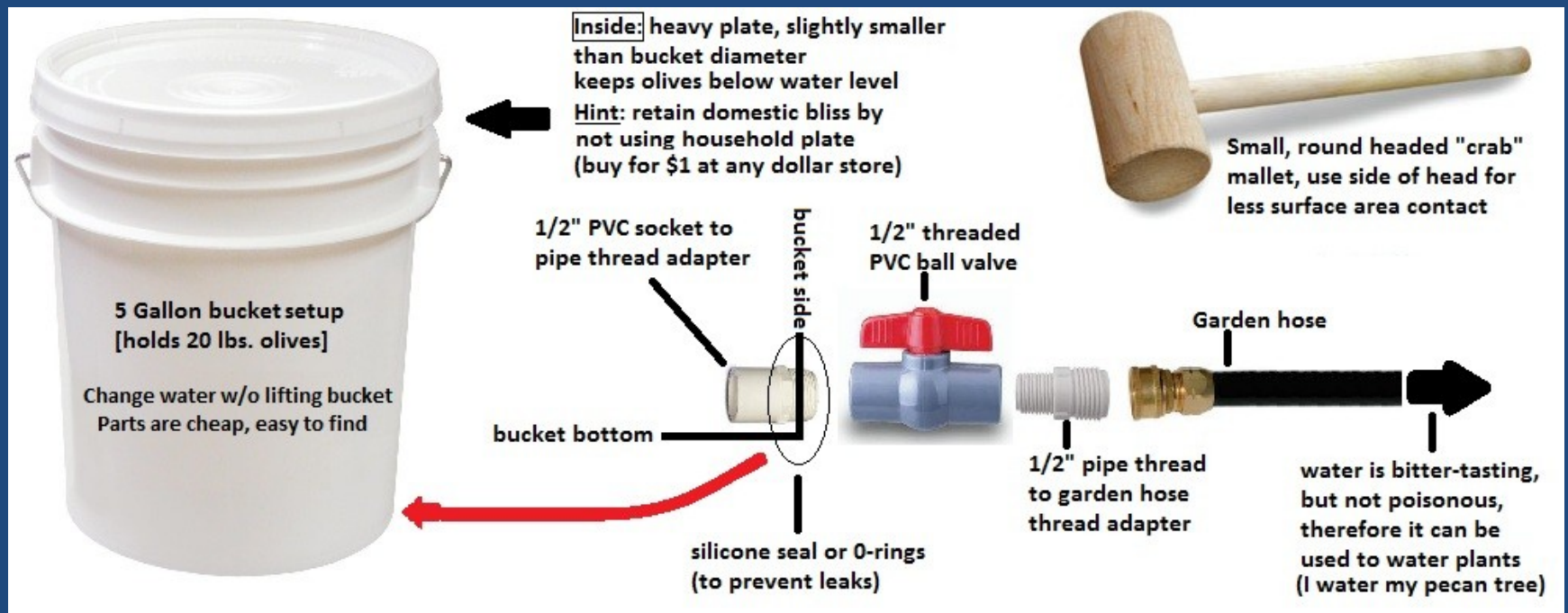
- Live in an olive-growing area? You're lucky! 😊
 - Look around, ask your neighbors. Olive trees are messy....many owners will happily allow you to pick olives , because whatever you pick doesn't later end up on the ground.
 - Don't collect fallen olives for curing (but if you clean up fallen olives as a courtesy for the owner, you'll be invited back)
- Don't live in an olive-growing area? Take Heart!
 - Some commercial growers sell part of their crop to home curers because it's "present value" income collected now rather than later (after their olives are processed, put into jars/cans, and sold)

Olive Curing Equipment

- Soaking/Splitting Equipment (bucket/ mallet)
- Brine Making Equipment (stockpot/crock)
- Canning Equipment (Jars + Pressure Cooker)
 - The Web is loaded with info about canning, so I don't go into detail about it.

Soaking/Splitting Equipment

- Splitting: small mallet, hit olives with side
- Soaking (my setup below): bucket w/ drain valve at bottom



Brine Making Equipment

- Use non-reactive container, like:
 - Large stainless steel stockpot (NOT aluminum)
 - Glass, earthenware or ceramic crock
 - e.g., “Aguas Frescas/horchata type glass jars



Why Soak/Split Olives?

- Raw olives are inedible (extremely bitter); soaking in water removes the bitterness
- Splitting olives before soaking is time-consuming, but greatly speeds up the process (days vs. months)

Splitting the Olives

- Hey, no one said this was quick or easy!
- Use just enough force to split skin, don't mash it!



Soaking the Olives

- A 5 gallon bucket holds 20 lbs of olives.
- Use a heavy plate to keep olives beneath water level (prevents oxidation), cover with bucket lid.
- Change water twice daily for two weeks; water is not poisonous and can be used on outside plants



Making the Salt Brine

(My Recipe; URLs to other recipes on last page)

- Coarse Salt like Kosher or ground rock salt
 - Use enough (fully dissolved) salt in the water that an unshelled raw egg will float to the surface
- Necessary Acidity: vinegar/lemon juice
 - 1 part lemon/vinegar per 10 parts salt brine, for flavor and to keep the environment hostile to bacteria. This is especially important if like me you plan to store the olives in a cool dark place without refrigeration.
 - People have cured olives for 4000 years: food health = common sense
- Dry Spices: Oregano, Cumin, Garlic, Peppers
 - Dry spices because I sometimes store my olives without refrigeration.

While Olives are in Brine...

- Keep olives below water level
- Float olive or other vegetable oil on top
- Might see some bubbling or some film buildup at water line
 - Both are common...curing olives is a “living” process, sort of a fermentation process. Just scrape film off.
 - Remove any smelly-squishy olives [this is common sense for any food process]

Canning Olives

- After a couple of weeks in the brine, you have a few options
 - If you have refrigerator space and will use the olives quickly, no need to 'can' them (they will continue to 'bubble' and can be messy)
 - If you are going to store in cool dark place, use normal glass-jar canning methods
 - Canning information is available all over the Web
 - Float some olive oil on top
 - Once the jar is opened, it needs to be refrigerated

When are they Ready?

- My ballpark figure: wait 4 months and try 'em
 - Along with large canning jars, I fill several small 8oz jars. I open one at 3 months, then 3.5, then 4, until I think they are ready.
 - I receive olives for curing in late September and give them as Christmas gifts, telling people “wait until Presidents’ Day to open the jars.” So far so good.
 - Unopened, they will last for up to one year

Curing Recipes & Add'l Info

- Sample internet search string:
curing OR preserving OR pickling AND olives
- Curing recipes and additional information
 - <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8267.pdf>
 - <http://www.recipecottage.com/preserving/>
 - <http://cesanjoaquin.ucdavis.edu/files/4249.pdf>
 - <http://www.olives101.com/2007/10/03/cure-your-own-olives-without-lye/>
 - http://www.oliveaustralia.com.au/Pickling_your_Olives/pickling_your_olives.html
 - <http://www.turkishlanguage.co.uk/olivecure.htm>

Review

- You can cure your own olives
- Biggest challenge: getting raw olives
- Material costs are low
- Time requirements are fairly high

Questions?

- Contact me: cure_olives@yahoo.com