

Pickled Cherries

3½ - 4 lbs. cherries, stemmed, pitted and about half of them cut in half
2 c. water
1 c. cider vinegar (substitute champagne or red wine vinegar)
1 c. granulated sugar
3 Tbl. pickling spice (generous tablespoons)
1 tsp. sea salt
2 tsp. black peppercorns
2 garlic cloves, smashed (optional)
Rind of 1 lemon (optional)

Make a thin simple syrup (3 to 1 ratio) with the water, vinegar and sugar: Put these three ingredients in a large sauce pot and bring to a boil. Boil until sugar dissolves. Add remaining ingredients but for cherries and continue to boil for another 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the mixture steep, covered, for 15 - 20 minutes. Strain liquid to remove solids and return to the pot. Bring to a boil. Add cherries and turn off the heat. Cover and let sit for 10 -15 minutes. Fill jars with cherries and enough liquid to cover. If you plan on keeping for more than 2 months. seal jars in a water bath. Otherwise, when the jars are cool, refrigerate until ready to use. Note: if you prefer a thicker liquid, make a medium simple syrup by increasing the sugar to 1 ½ c. (2 to 1 ratio). To make a sweet sauce, make a heavy simple syrup with equal parts water and sugar ("tante pour tante" as it's called in French) and boil for about 10 - 15 minutes. Add cherries, corn syrup, a stick of cinnamon, a little lemon juice and reduce heat to simmer. Stirring frequently, cook cherries for about 10 minutes. Thicken with a cornstarch slurry (cornstarch dissolved in water). Remove cinnamon and serve with ice cream, angel food cake, etc.