

THE PRACTICE

Harvest Chutney

This chutney has it all: sweetness, acidity, earthy spices, and that slow-cooked umami depth. It's my grandpa's recipe, which I've tweaked over the years, and as with all good chutneys, it's about cooking the produce for long enough to transform its texture to a jam-like consistency. If you can't get hold of green tomatoes, slightly underripe or ordinary tomatoes also work brilliantly.



MAKES

2 x 500ml (16fl oz) jars

INGREDIENTS

olive oil, for frying
1 onion, finely diced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tsp ground allspice
1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp chilli flakes
1 tsp coriander seeds
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground nutmeg
1.5kg (3lb 3oz) green tomatoes, roughly chopped
2 Bramley apples, peeled, cored, and sliced
100g (3½oz) sultanas
2 litres (3½ pints) cider vinegar
1kg (2¼lb) caster sugar
1 tsp salt, or to taste

EQUIPMENT

heavy-based, stainless-steel preserving pan
2 x 500ml (16fl oz) preserving jars

Method

- 01 Add a little olive oil followed by the onion, garlic, and spices to a large preserving pan and fry over a low heat until softened (**fig. a**). Before the onions brown, add in the tomatoes, apples, and sultanas.
- 02 Simmer over a low heat, stirring every 5 minutes or so (**fig. b**), for 45 minutes, until the apples and tomatoes are nicely cooked. They should have a soft texture while still retaining some shape in the pan (I don't like my chutney completely broken down, as I like to see what I'm eating).
- 03 Add the vinegar and simmer for a further 1–2 hours, remembering to stir occasionally at first and then more attentively as the liquid reduces to avoid burning the bottom of the pan. Add a dash more vinegar if the liquid is reducing too quickly.
- 04 Once the mixture has thickened, add the sugar and stir until dissolved, then season to taste with the salt. Cook for a further 15–20 minutes over a medium-high heat until the mixture is thick enough for you to draw your spoon across the bottom of the pan and leave a clear trail behind (see p.37).
- 05 Spoon the chutney into jars and fill them to the top to minimize the presence of oxygen (**fig. c**) and aid preservation. Seal and label the jars, and keep for 6–12 months. Allow to mature for at least 2 weeks before enjoying. Once opened, store in the fridge.

EXPERT TIPS

The ratio for chutney is around 6:2:1, so, for example, 3kg (6½lb) raw prepped ingredients to 1 litre (1¾ pints) vinegar to 500g (1lb 2oz) sugar. Using this as your starting point, you can devise your own chutney recipes, experimenting with different ingredients, vinegars, and sugars.

Remember to stir the mixture at the bottom of the pan, not just the top. Due to the sugars, chutney can burn easily, which will taint the preserve with a strong charred flavour. Keep it moving and, if necessary, add a splash more vinegar to cook for a long time.

Use a stainless-steel pan to prevent metal contaminating your food and the acid levels corroding the surface. Heavy-based pans are particularly good for chutney, as they conduct a steady heat during the longer cooking time and will help you avoid burning the mixture on the bottom of the pan.



Figure a.



Figure b.



Figure c.