

TOP pickles TESTED

8

It's brine all around

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PICKLES make for handy summer salads. As a way of preserving vegetables pickling is useful and means that jars hidden at the back of the cupboard may not be out of date at all. One product I surveyed has a sell-by date of 2017.

However, once opened pickled foods should be eaten within a week.

Endlessly versatile, they can be added to a picnic basket and served with cold meats, or in a sandwich. I have given some ideas below and more on my blog rozcrowley.com.

For this survey I looked for some new products and found interesting ones, along with a few classics. I left out the huge range of olives, the ultimate pickled food, which can taste bitter until pickled in brine. They can also be

cured in oil or rubbed with salt to preserve them.

Most vegetables are pickled in vinegar, or in brine or both. Some are pickled in a vinaigrette dressing, so appear more oily than acidic.

There is also plenty of good pickled beetroot available. We found little difference in quality of brands, and all were perfectly acceptable. If you want them to be less acidic, then slice or dice whole ones. I like to dice them finely and add to a simple green salad, to mayonnaise, or to cooked chickpeas, or on the side with goats cheese.

We went through a wide range of products to come up with our Top 8. As the liquid weights varied considerably, we have given drained weights unless otherwise stated.

The Real Olive pickled garlic, 200g €4

Four heads of garlic pickled in sherry vinegar are just a little less hard than fresh garlic. The garlic flavour is nicely muted by the sherry vinegar and there are no harsh vinegar tastes, but a sweetness which is delicious. Slice thinly and use in salads. Add chopped at the last minute to stir-fries.



Healthy You ginger seaweed salad, 175g €4/€4.50

The benefits of seaweed are well documented with iron and iodine among a long list of minerals as well as a large number of vitamins. It's not easy to find a palatable seaweed product but this one has a lovely zing of ginger, some chopped olives, soy sauce and a little malt vinegar. The texture of the shredded kelp has a decent chew, but is not leathery, as is often the case with seaweeds. Use in green salads to add texture and flavour or on the side with meats. Available Coal Quay market, Quay Co-op, Good Fish Co, Cork, and others at www.seaweedsalads.ie



The Cultured Food Co raw sauerkraut, ruby red, 650g €5.50

Fermented foods contain natural compounds which are said to have cancer-fighting properties, with compounds even greater in number than in live yoghurt. Vinegar is not used to make sauerkraut. Instead it is salted and allowed to ferment naturally. This sauerkraut is particularly tasty with the addition of cumin seeds and its red colour is more attractive than white cabbage. In health food shops and West Cork Foods, English Market, Cork.



Marks & Spencer grilled artichokes, 260g €4.49

Less expensive artichokes often have their hard, chewy outer leaves left on, so while these seem expensive they are better value. Artichokes are good for liver and gall bladder problems, arthritis and rheumatism and here they have added benefits of olive oil, vinegar, parsley, lemon juice and salt, though perhaps need to be drained of this dressing for those with gall bladder conditions. Serve with patés, roast meat part of an antipasti collection. This weight includes 23% oil.

