



ANDREA NGUYEN'S

Pass the Fish Sauce

recipe

Pickled Shallots

For a crisp outcome, select the firmest, smallest shallot clusters possible – no wider than 2 inches. I mostly find them in the fall and early winter. This recipe was originally published in Ever-Green Vietnamese (2024, Ten Speed Press).

Makes 2 ½ cups

- 1 lb small, firm shallots
- 2 Tbsp fine sea salt
- 1 ¼ cups water
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar

Peel and cut the shallots

Bring a kettle of water to a boil. Put the shallots in a small bowl and add boiled water to cover. Let sit for 30 to 60 seconds to loosen the skins, then drain.

Trim the root and stem ends of the shallots, then peel away the dry brown skin with a knife (a regular or bird's beak paring knife is super-handy). Remove any dry-looking or soft layers under the skin; save them for broth. Separate any bulbs that are stuck together (look at the root ends for clues). Leave bulbs that are no bigger than ½ inch wide as is, but halve the others lengthwise. Quarter the large ones as long as they don't end up bigger than 1 inch wide.

Soak overnight

In a medium bowl, combine the salt and 1¼ cups water. Add the shallots and cover the bowl with plastic wrap, pressing the plastic down to ensure contact with the salt solution. Let stand at room temperature for 6 hours to 24 hours to reduce harshness. Drain and rinse the shallots well under cold water.

Briefly cook, then allow to mature

In a 1-to 1½-qt saucepan over medium heat, combine the sugar and vinegar and bring to a rolling boil, stirring occasionally, about 1 minute or until the sugar dissolves. Add the shallots and when bubbles appear at the edge of the pan, immediately turn off the heat. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the shallots to a 1-qt heatproof jar. Pour in the hot brine to fill to the rim. Let cool completely, uncovered, then cap and refrigerate.

Let the shallots mature for 4 or 5 days before trying. If they're too strong, let sit for 1 or 2 days longer before serving.