

ADVISORY STATEMENT ON OVERNITE DILLS--PART II:

EVALUATION OF OVERNITE DILL PICKLES FROM RETAIL

CONTAINERS (1-QT. GLASS) COLLECTED PRIMARILY IN THE
METROPOLITAN NEW YORK CITY AREA^{6/}Summarized Results

During the three-day period from March 31-April 2, 1972, a total of 25 samples, consisting of 24 1-qt. jars and a single 1-1/2 qt. jar of whole, "Overnite Dill Pickles" (= overnite, half sour dills, or new pickles, etc.) were collected in the metropolitan area of New York City. These samples, representing products prepared by seven manufacturers, were obtained from refrigerated cases in nine large retail stores located in two counties of New Jersey (Bergen and Passaic).

The pickles, stored at 40°F, were evaluated on the premises of a cooperating New Jersey pickle plant as to "Overall Acceptability" by a panel of five experienced judges. These ratings, based mostly on product flavor, odor, texture, and appearance, were supplemented by a number of chemical and physical tests such as: acidity, pH, salt, and sugar content of the pickle brine, together with bloater content and firmness measurements on whole pickles. The latter chemical and physical tests are not reported here.

Of the first 25 samples judged (see Table I, area I), over one-half (56%) were placed as "Not Acceptable". Only one-fifth (20%) of the pickle samples were rated as "Good". Of the remaining samples, three (12%) were judged "Fair"; and one each (4%) was placed as "Excellent", "Poor", and "Barely Acceptable". The reasons most frequently given by the judges for their ratings of "Not Acceptable" were: (1) the product was actively fermenting, resulting in an unpleasant odor and flavor; (2) the pickles were soft, apparently resulting from an undesirable fermentation, faulty closure, or packing moldy stock; and, (3) the green-stock used was already undergoing decomposition and spoilage at the time it was packed.

It was also noted that, of the 14 samples rated "Not Acceptable", 10 had undergone vigorous fermentation with a visual brine turbidity value of 3+ or greater; also, this condition was usually accompanied by gas pressure on the cap, ranging from a low of 0.5 pound to a high of 8 pounds (measured at 40°F!). The five lots of pickles receiving the highest numerical ratings, namely, 9, 8.2, 8, 8, and 7.4 (based on a score of 1 = Not Acceptable to 10 = Excellent) all had brine turbidity values of 2+ or less (two had "0" turbidity).

A follow-up study on 23 jars collected in the same metropolitan production area about 3-4 months later (Table II) gave better results as to a fewer number of jars of pickles placed as "Not Acceptable" (half of the number of the first set of samples), but the "Barely Acceptable" to "Poor" ratings represented nearly 40% of the jars! The percentage of jars of pickles placed as "Fair", "Good" and "Excellent" amounted to 17, 13 and 17%, respectively.

It is apparent that the quality of Overnite Dill Pickles in glass jars being offered the consumer in the geographical area(s) sampled leaves much to be desired.⁷

⁶Prepared by John L. Etchells (see Page 1, footnote No. 1 for affiliation).- Our sincere thanks are given to the various pickle plants and their staffs for their cooperation and direct assistance during this study; the same applies to the Food Fermentation staff.

⁷Results of examination of some 25 Overnite Dill samples from 4 geographical areas of the USA, other than New York City, are shown in Table I, Sources II, III, IV, and V.

TABLE I

Summary of Results of the Evaluation of 50 Samples of Overnite Dill Pickles in Several Geographical Areas of the Country (Spring, 1972). ⁸

Area	Source of Samples	Number of Samples	Number and percentage of samples placed in each rating category					
			Not Acceptable	Barely Acceptable	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
I	New York City, N.Y. ⁹	25	No. 14 %	No. 1 %	No. 1 %	No. 3 %	No. 5 %	No. 1 %
II.	Minneapolis Minn. ⁹	10	0 0	4 40	2 20	2 20	2 20	0 0
III.	Detroit, Mich. ⁹	8	1 12.5	2 25	2 25	2 25	1 12.5	0 0
IV.	Raleigh, NC	5	2 40	0 0	0 0	3 60	0 0	0 0
V.	Greenfield Mass.	2	0 0	0 0	1 50	0 0	1 50	0 0
	TOTAL	50	17 34%	7 14%	6 12%	10 20%	9 18%	1 2%

⁸ Samples were, with one exception, in one-quart glass jars stored in refrigerated counters or cases of large retail stores. Period covered by samplings was from April 1, 1972 to May 1, 1972

⁹ Metropolitan area of the city named.

TABLE II

Summary of Results of the Evaluation of 23 Additional Samples of Overnite Dill Pickles in the New York City Area (August 19, 1972).

Manufacturer	Number Of Samples	Number and percentage of samples placed in each rating category					
		Not Acceptable	Barely Acceptable	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
		No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
I	8	2 25	1 12.5	1 12.5	3 37.5	1 12.5	0 0
II.	6	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 17	1 17	4 66
III.	6	1 16	2 34	3 50	0 0	0 0	0 0
IV.	2	0 0	0 0	1 50	0 0	1 50	0 0
V.	1	0 0	0 0	1 100	0 0	0 0	0 0
TOTAL	23	3 13%	3 13%	6 26%	4 17%	3 13%	4 17%