

# Havva's Fried Pickles

*That's why, explains Halbwachs, older people talk more about their childhood memories as they get older. But this is a gap between the old generation and the new. As I progress in my journey, I understand better that I chose the cuisine and the food to overcome this abyss [...] In my process of collecting recipes, I noticed that I was more attracted to unsustainable recipes than others, especially because the ingredients were no longer produced or the information flow was interrupted. I had the will to seal a forgotten or forgettable memory with words.*



## **Sidar Tekin**

The recipe for fried green bean pickles I got from my mother is as follows:

“It is better with longer and flat beans. You pick those over and put them in boiling water. They will soak for 1-2 minutes. Then you take them out and put them on a tray and pour cold water to quick-freeze. You have to remove the stem end. When you cook green beans with olive oil you remove both ends, but here you only remove one stem end.

After you quick-freeze, you put the beans in a jar or a can, whatever you are going to use. You add garlic. You add salt water. You have to prepare this with rock salt. Back in the day in Black Sea Region they didn't use vinegar or anything, they used salt water only.

My mother was verifying the amount of salt as follows: Once she prepared the salt water she put an egg in it. If the egg doesn't stay at the bottom but floats 2-3 centimeters above the bottom, that was OK. This was called the salt test. She made this test and then poured the salt water in the can. Then it must sit for 1-2 weeks, you never open it. Then you can start eating it. This is how you make pickles.

And when you want to eat some, you take some of the beans out and soak in water for a while. Then you throw away this water. Then you chop up small pieces of 5 centimeters. And you can't cook anything without butter. You must put butter (we look at each other). Well, you can also use virgin olive oil. But it must be olive oil, not sunflower seed oil.

Then fry the onion in butter (or oil). In the past you would add nothing else. You only put pickles and its own juice. It was cooked with onions. But now, my brother changed the recipe. Now he adds some tomatoes, about half a tomato. He puts red pepper paste to make it a bit hot. It already has garlic, but he adds more garlic. He adds some water with the pickles. It will absorb the water, of course, it shouldn't be very watery. We also used to crumble some cornbread in it, it would be very good.”

In an article on family memory, Maurice Halbwachs says that each new marriage is a start on the way to establishing the future. These two people who do not have a common past to think about together disregard the past, plunge into the pursuits of daily life, and actually create a past that they can remember together years later. This process creates family memory. But these two grown people don't completely erase their separate histories, but when they get older and the pursuits of everyday life dwindle, they find time to reminisce about their initial separate pasts. That's why, explains Halbwachs, older people talk more about their childhood memories as they get older. But this is a gap between the old generation and the new. As I progress in my journey, I understand better that I chose the cuisine and the food to overcome this abyss.

As I hear and watch my grandmother forget many things as she gets older, her not being able to recognize my mother when she sees her, and not being able to cook anymore, this bond I formed with my mother and every word that comes out of her mouth becomes even more precious. The fact that food is an essential need that ensures the continuation of life is not just because of its ingredients. In addition to these, there are other needs that food fulfills: it gives us space and time to be together, learn together, explore together.

In my process of collecting recipes, I noticed that I was more attracted to unsustainable recipes than others, especially because the ingredients were no longer produced or the information flow was interrupted. I had the will to seal a forgotten or forgettable memory with

words. That's why, after the *kuymak* and *kavut* recipes, I pursued another recipe specific to my grandmother. And this led me to fried pickles recipe.

While I was growing up, I came across sentences such as “Hatay's mezes are very good, they are so diverse etc.” But I had never thought of such a thing as Black Sea meze, until my mother talked about it. Fried pickles can only be summed up so well.

“Fried pickles is like a main dish but we generally cook it for breakfast. And we put one plate aside the main dish, as a meze. My mother used to prepare pickles in cans of 10-20 kilograms. Among people from the Black Sea, there was no house in which they didn't prepare green bean pickles. You can eat it as a pickle, but you can also fry it for breakfast. This is the Black Sea meze. You dip some bread in it and eat like that.”

In my grandmother's house, the way they cook fried pickle has changed over time, they added new ingredients to the recipe. For example, when making pickles, vinegar was not used in the past, my uncle now adds red pepper paste and tomatoes while preparing it. Tastes and possibilities are changing, says my mother:

“The recipe I gave, it's the way it's prepared during penury. You didn't even have red pepper paste or anything. You think they ate tomatoes? This is a dish made in Black Sea villages when everything was scarce. For example, in a village you always have butter, but you can't always have sunflower seed oil. There is butter because there are sheep. There is milk, they use the churn and comes out the butter. Now it changed, now those who don't want to eat butter make it with sunflower seed oil. At the time even tomatoes were hard to find.”

I would like to finish with a wordless dialogue I had with my mother as she was giving me the recipe. When my mother said that there was often butter in her Black Sea recipes, she also used a phrase like “Not possible without butter” for fried pickles. At that moment our eyes met and an involuntary expression appeared on my face, silently asking “Why?” My mother immediately changed her wording and said, “Well you can also cook it with olive oil, yes, it can be as good.” In these few seconds during which we were looking at each other, many dialogues were hidden. Cooking non-exploitative meals is as much a matter of habit as not

doing it, especially as our possibilities increase. You can cook fried pickles without butter, and it is very good!

## **Ingredients**

### *For pickles:*

- Green beans
- Salt
- Lemon

### *For fried pickles:*

- Pickles
- Red pepper paste
- Garlic
- Tomatoes
- Salt
- Sunflower seed oil