

### ***Latest variation on Utopenci (Czech Pickled Bar Sausages)***

Vince Pitelka – 6/22/2020

Unlike the bottles of pickled sausages that you often find on bars in the US, these are not loaded with nitrites and must be kept refrigerated until consumed. They will keep in the fridge for months.

This recipe fills four quart or two half-gallon canning jars.

#### **Ingredients**

5 cups – raw apple cider vinegar

1 cup – water

3 tblsp. – dry crushed red pepper

1 tsp. – ground black pepper

1 tsp. - salt

8 tblsp. – minced garlic

8 tblsp. – fish sauce

1 tsp. – dill weed

6 – bay leaves

2 – medium yellow onions, peeled, halved, and sliced thin

1 – large red onion, peeled, halved, and sliced thin

5 lbs. – pre-cooked beef, pork, chicken, or turkey sausages.

#### ***About Sausages***

Any sausages with high fat content will be tough once they are pickled, since these utopenci are generally eaten cold. Any sausage with high fat content can also leave an unpleasant fat residue in your mouth. I found that a lot of the high-end sausages and kielbasa are high in fat content.

I have tried chicken breakfast sausages from the supermarket and from Costco. They have a low fat content, but I was not happy with the results. They just didn't have much flavor.

For one batch, I used Greenridge Farms beef snack sticks in the deli fridge cases at Costco, and they were very good. They come three 12-oz packages bundled together, and two of those 36-oz bundles was enough for two half-gallon canning jars with some left over.

For my latest batch, I used Hebrew National all-natural uncured beef franks, which have a fat content of only 15%. These turned out well. I like the texture, and they pick up the flavors.

Most pickled bar sausages you get in the US are made from fine-textured beef or pork sausage, and I enjoy them. But those sausages are made to be kept out on the bar with no refrigeration, and are loaded with nitrates for preservation. If you want to try franks, just look for the lowest fat content. As mentioned, the Hebrew National franks I used were only 15% fat, but beware, because there are other Hebrew National franks that have a much higher fat content, especially the big jumbo-size ones. Boar's Head beef franks were 27% fat, and their knockwurst was 43% fat.

Chicken and Turkey sausages or franks will have the lowest fat content, but based on my experience with the chicken breakfast sausages, they are apt to come out pretty bland. If you want to make utopenci with the lowest possible fat content, then this would be the best choice, but if you do that, it would be a good idea to boost the content of garlic, fish sauce, and spices.

### **Instructions**

Divide the brine ingredients including vinegar, water, all the spices, garlic, and fish sauce equally between two pans on the stove (so you can ensure that equal parts of everything get in each of the two canning jars). Bring to a boil and simmer for a few minutes.

Cut the sausages into short lengths, and layer alternately with the onions in the canning jars. Fill all the way but do not pack too tight – leave room for the brine.

Pour half of the brine liquid from one pan into a separate bowl, pour the remaining brine and all the spices and garlic into one of the jars, and then fill the jar to the brim with the remaining brine from the bowl. Discard any remaining brine. If the brine does not fill the jar, top it up with two parts cider vinegar to one part water. Do the same with the second jar.

Screw lids on tight, leave out overnight, and then put in fridge for at least a week before sampling. They are best after about two weeks.

**NOTE:** These pickled sausages have no preservatives other than the vinegar and salt, and other than being left out at room temperature for the first 24 hours (to help the pickling process along), they must be kept refrigerated until you finish them off. As mentioned, they will keep in the fridge for months.