

“The Boston Cooking-School Cookbook”



112 years ago today (January 7, 1896), **Fannie Farmer** (1857-1915) published her first cookbook, *The Boston Cooking-School Cookbook*. Though the title has changed, and it's gone through multiple editions, you can still buy a copy today, though it's now sold under the name "[The Fannie Farmer Cookbook](#)."

Next time you read a recipe with precise measurements, you can thank Fannie. Before her book, cookbook authors were satisfied to give vague measurements and quantities for ingredients, relying on the experience of the cook to work out the details. Fannie adopted a more scientific approach, and wrote her recipes precise quantities – a *cup* of sugar, a *tablespoon* of butter, etc.

You can read a copy of the book online, either in [graphic form](#), in [text](#), or in [pdf](#). (A later version – the last one edited by Fannie, herself, published in 1918, can be seen [here](#).)

As for me, the section I've found myself consulting the most frequently in the copy of her cookbook (that I inherited) is for kosher dill pickles. There are pickle recipes in the 1896 version of her cookbook, but aside from being made from cucumbers, the technique isn't very similar. In fact, her

cookbook contains two recipes for cucumber pickles (ripe and unripe), but, with cinnamon, cloves, and sugar, both seem to be what I was raised knowing as “bread and butter pickles.”

1896 : [Ripe Cucumber Pickle](#), page 487

Cut cucumbers in halves lengthwise. Cover with alum water, allowing two teaspoons powdered alum to each quart of water. Heat gradually to the boiling point, then let stand on back of range two hours. Remove alum water and chill in ice water. Make a syrup by boiling five minutes two pounds sugar, one pint vinegar, with two tablespoons each of whole cloves and stick cinnamon tied in a piece of muslin. Add cucumbers and cook ten minutes. Remove cucumbers to a stone jar and pour over the syrup. Scald syrup three successive mornings, and return to fruit.

I wouldn't even know where to buy alum these days.

Later: Hey, [whattaya know](#)? What they used to call alum, we call a styptic pencil (aluminium sulfate or potassium aluminium sulfate), used to heal up tiny nicks when you cut yourself shaving. Sounds yummy!