



Makes 4 gyros + 3 cups pickles
Preparation Time: 40 minutes
Cook Time: 24 hours 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. thick watermelon rind
1 cup apple cider vinegar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pure cane sugar
1 tablespoon kosher salt
4 cloves garlic
1 teaspoon whole allspice
1 teaspoon whole cloves
1 teaspoon dried pink peppercorns
1 medium eggplant, trimmed, unpeeled, and cut lengthwise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices (14 oz.)
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon sea salt
1 8-oz. sweet potato, bias-sliced very thin (see tip in intro)
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 to 3 teaspoons salt-free Greek seasoning
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup raw cashews
3 tablespoons lemon juice
4 teaspoons Dijon mustard
2 to 3 tablespoons unsweetened, unflavored plant-based milk
1 teaspoon chopped fresh dill
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
4 rounds whole wheat pita bread, halved and split
2 roma tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 cup fresh baby spinach

Roasted Eggplant Gyros with Watermelon Rind Pickles

This traditionally meat-heavy meal is transformed into a plant-based crowd pleaser with strips of savory baked **eggplant** and sweet potatoes. These yummy vegan gyros are packed full of fresh ingredients, and the watermelon rind pickles make a tangy topper that tastes great while reducing **food waste** in the kitchen. The homemade vegan tzatziki sauce adds a creamy, herb-infused element that perfectly complements the veggie medley stuffed inside tender whole wheat pita pockets. Serve extra pickles on the side—you're gonna love them!

Tip: For this recipe look for a round, fat sweet potato and slice it as thin as possible. A mandoline works great for this.

By Shelli McConnell

- 1 For pickles, remove and discard skin from watermelon rind. Trim away all but a little pink from the inside of the rind. Cut rind into 1-inch cubes. In a large saucepan combine apple cider vinegar, can sugar, kosher salt, 2 cloves of garlic, the allspice, cloves, pink peppercorns and 1 cup water. Bring to boiling, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Stir in watermelon rind. Return to boiling, then reduce to a simmer. Simmer 10 minutes. Transfer rind pieces to a glass jar or other container; add pickling liquid to cover. Let stand until cool. Cover and chill at least 24 hours and up to 2 weeks.
- 2 For gyros, sprinkle eggplant slices with $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt. Place in a colander; let stand 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper. Rinse eggplant slices under cold water; pat dry. Arrange eggplant and sweet potato slices on prepared baking sheets and lightly brush with the 2 tablespoons vinegar. Sprinkle with Greek seasoning. Roast eggplant and sweet potato 15 minutes or until golden brown and tender. Cut into strips.
- 3 For Tzatziki Sauce, soak the cashews in enough hot water to cover for 15 minutes; drain. In a small food processor or blender combine the soaked cashews, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, and remaining 2 cloves of garlic. Process until nearly smooth, gradually adding 2 to 3 tablespoons of plant-based milk until creamy. Stir in dill and freshly ground black pepper.
- 4 Fill pita pockets with eggplant, sweet potato, tomatoes, spinach, cucumber, and onion. Top each gyro with 1 to 2 tablespoons of the watermelon pickles. Drizzle with Tzatziki Sauce.

½ cup thinly sliced cucumber

¼ cup thinly sliced red onion