

A student asks which books he suggests and he nods towards one displayed on the table: Linda Ziedrich's *The Joy of Pickling*, which he says he has used often and lauds for its "highly adaptable recipes." One topic which the students, all in their 20s and 30s, can't help returning to is which fruits and vegetables have yielded the most disappointing results when pickled. Over the night, Bob recounts several failures: apples, asparagus, basically anything that easily loses its snap and gets soft. It's all part of the experimentation, of course, and what is important is what works, and what works is his bestseller, the Spicy Garlic Dill, which he sells at various gourmet spots around the city like the **Bedford Cheese Shop, Murray's Cheese Shop** and Whole Foods.

He finally boils the last full pickle jars in a hot water bath to sterilize them and the crowd disperses out into the snowy street. I stay behind and we talk about how he was introduced to Brooklyn's pickle legacy with a tour through the old French Pickle Works building on S 5th Street, his hopes to expand into gourmet markets overseas and what goes best with his spicy pickles (his answer: a Brooklyn Lager and a sandwich). The topic turns to the trials of initially expanding his family's business into Brooklyn and he says something that kind of sums up the fun, devil-may-care spirit of most of these small, upstart Brooklyn gourmet companies: "I thought that if this doesn't work, well at least we've got 500 Christmas presents to give away."

-Keith Wagstaff