Prep Time	15 minutes
Cook Time	20 minutes
Chilling Time	2 hours (minimum)
Total Time	2 hours 35 minutes
Intensity / Difficulty	Easy (Level 1 of 5)
Servings	6 side portions
Cuisine	British-American
Method	Quick-pickle / stovetop

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Ingredients

- 1 kg (2¼ lb) firm onions — brown, red, or a mix

- 250 ml (1 cup) cider vinegar
- 150 ml (⅔ cup) water
- 100 g (½ cup) granulated sugar
- 2 tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp celery seeds
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- ¼ tsp chilli flakes (optional)
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter (for the warm serving option)

Equipment

- Large saucepan or preserving pan
- Sharp knife and chopping board
- Measuring jug and spoons
- Sterilised glass jar (1-litre capacity) if storing
- Wooden spoon

Method

Step 1 — Prepare the onions *(5 minutes, low intensity)*

Peel the onions, halve them, and slice into 5 mm (¼ inch) half-moons. Keep the slices reasonably thick so they retain bite after cooking. Set aside.

Step 2 — Bloom the spices *(2 minutes, low intensity)*

In a dry saucepan over medium-low heat, toast the mustard seeds and celery seeds for 60–90 seconds until fragrant and just popping. Do not let them scorch.

Step 3 — Build the brine *(3 minutes, low intensity)*

Add the vinegar, water, sugar, salt, turmeric, chilli flakes (if using), and bay leaves to the pan. Stir over medium heat until the sugar and salt dissolve fully — about 2–3 minutes. The liquid should be hot but not yet boiling.

Step 4 — Simmer the onions *(10–12 minutes, medium intensity)*

Add all the onion slices to the brine. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, then reduce to medium-low. Cook uncovered for 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions are softened but still hold their shape and the brine has reduced slightly. Do not overcook — they should be tender-crisp, not mushy.

Step 5 — Warm butter finish *(2 minutes, low intensity — optional)*

For a warm, buttery serving, melt the butter in a wide frying pan over low heat, then fold in the drained onions and toss for 1–2 minutes until glossy. Reserve the brine for drizzling.

Step 6 — Cool and chill *(2 hours, passive)*

Transfer the onions and brine to a sterilised jar. Cool to room temperature (about 30 minutes), then refrigerate for at least 2 hours for the flavours to develop. The onions keep for up to 2 weeks refrigerated.

Time & Intensity Summary

Stage	Time	Heat Level	Intensity
Prep & slicing	5 min	—	Low
Toast spices	2 min	Medium-low	Low
Dissolve brine	3 min	Medium	Low
Simmer onions	10–12 min	Medium → Medium-low	Medium
Butter finish (optional)	2 min	Low	Low
Chill	2 hours	—	Passive
Total active time	~22 minutes		Easy

Serving Suggestions

- Warm, buttered, alongside roast chicken, sausages, or steak
- Cold from the jar with mature cheddar and sourdough
- Folded through a potato salad or grain bowl
- Layered into a grilled cheese sandwich

Nutrition (per serving, approx.)

Based on 6 servings, including the optional butter.

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	145 kcal
Total Fat	5 g
— Saturated Fat	2.5 g
Carbohydrates	23 g
— Sugars	18 g
Fibre	2 g
Protein	1.5 g
Sodium	420 mg