

Onions, Pickled

written by Alison Carr after meeting up with chemist Karen Dales

Titration, cos they were backward.
They used titration to test the PH of the vinegar.
The vinegar for the pickled onions.
The acid, the vinegar blend, goes in the burette.
In the flask an alkali with an indicator, maybe sodium hydroxide.
Drip it through, drip by drip, the indicator (drip) changes colour (drip) when it's a neutral solution
On the scale, neutral is a 6 or a 7.
A scale created to see the acid. Imagination. A certain type of imagination to know what's going on cos you can't see it.
Neutral means your throat doesn't burn out when you eat your pickled onion.
Nobody wants that.
That would ruin the pickled onion experience.
Drip.
Swap the lines. No microbes.
Sterilise the jars. No microbes.
Check the mousetraps.
At the cable company, rubber and plastic, god I hated it
At the cable company, London Underground, specs to withstand the heat, the grease.
There's a lot of responsibility. Lives.
Reformulate it, make it better, save a penny.
The best ones went to Marksies.
The best pickled onions.
Consistency. Blend. Size.
Vernier Caliper – measure the onions.
Colour, go by eye.
I stink. Joggers and a t-shirt is all I can wear under my lab coat.
I wash them separately.
Gherkins too. And beetroot. At Christmas it's like a bloodbath.
Mainly onions, though. At Ross's Onions. Pickled.
Cos space, everyone loves space, and light and plants, adaptation.
Flash bang whallop.
Or not.
Cos sometimes it's pickled onions.
That's what science is all about.

Alison's credits include: IRIS (Live Theatre); FAT ALICE (tour incl Traverse Theatre, Oran Mor); THE SOAKING OF VERA SHRIMP (Winner, Live Theatre/Empty Space Bursary Award); A WONDROUS PLACE (Northern Spirit, tour); NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS (Theatre503); CAN CAUSE DEATH (National Theatre). Radio credits include DOLLY WOULD (BBC Radio 4).