

In The Garden

Cucumber

Cucumbers originated in South Asia and have been cultivated in India for at least 3,000 years. Cucumbers were introduced to Europe either by the Greeks or the Romans. During the 16th century, European trappers in North America introduced cucumbers to the Native Americans in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions. Applying sliced cucumber directly to the skin can help cool and soothe the skin and reduce swelling. This is how the term “cool as a cucumber” came to be.

Cucumbers grow on a creeping plant of the gourd family and is a relative of the pumpkin, watermelon and other squash. Cucumber plants climb by tendrils, which are thin shoots that grow from the stem. The tendrils start by growing straight and then begin to grow in a spiral once they feel something they can attach to. There are three main varieties of cucumber: slicing, pickling, and seedless. Cucumbers are available year round with a peak season from May until August. Cucumbers grow best in hot weather, and

the fruits can become bitter if exposed to uneven watering conditions.



Cucumbers are 95% water and make a refreshing hydrating snack on hot summer days.

Nutrition Benefits

Cucumbers are:

- Low in calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium free
- A good source of vitamin K
- A good source of hydration

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Eating Cucumbers

Cucumbers are most often eaten raw in salads, in cold soups, in cucumber based sauces, and as hors d'oeuvres. They are also the vegetable of choice for pickles. Pickles are made by placing cucumbers in a seasoned salt brine or vinegar solution.

Choose cucumbers.

Choose cucumbers with good color. Cucumbers should be firm over their entire length. Cucumbers should be well-developed, but not too large. Avoid cucumbers with withered or shriveled ends.

Wash and dry the fruit. Always wash cucumbers before peeling or eating by rubbing the peel under cool, running water. Since the peel is edible, you don't want any traces of dirt on the surface. Pat the fruit dry with a paper towel.

Remove the seeds (optional). Some people prefer to remove the seeds of slicing cucumbers before eating. Simply slice the cucumber lengthwise and use a spoon to scrap out the seeds.



Cucumber Salad

Ingredients

- 1 large cucumber (peeled and thinly sliced)
- 2 tablespoons yogurt, low-fat
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 teaspoon dill weed (optional)
- 1 dash pepper (optional)

Directions

1. Peel and thinly slice cucumber.
2. Mix all other ingredients in the mixing bowl.
3. Add cucumber slices and stir until coated.
4. Chill until serving.

<https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/cucumber-salad>



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