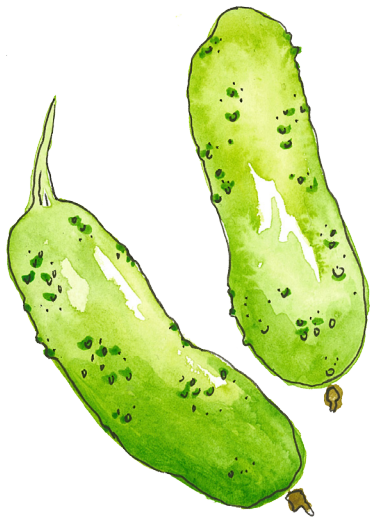


CUCUMBERS

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Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.

Tidbit

Cucumbers are part of the gourd family, which means they're related to squash (they both have prickly vines). There are three main types of cucumbers: slicing, pickling, and seedless. Cucumbers have a nice crisp crunch to them, making them a great textural addition to salads and sandwiches. Depending on the variety, cucumbers may be all different shapes, sizes, and colors!

Benefits

Cucumbers are hydrating vegetables that help replenish the fluids and minerals lost in our perspiration. They also contain Vitamin E, which is great for our skin. Try rubbing a slice on your face to experience their refreshing benefits! Cucumbers also have a high water and high fiber content which aids in digestion.

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Use a vegetable spiralizer to make cucumber 'noodles' for a fun salad!
- Add fresh slices to any sandwich to liven things up!
- Slice some up, put them in a jar or other container with a brine solution and let sit overnight in the fridge for a quick-pickle recipe!

Mini-activities

- Taste test slices of cucumber dipped into different types of salad dressing (sesame-ginger, balsamic, ranch, etc.).
- Compare and contrast raw vs. cooked cucumber.

Storage Tips

1. Clean | Remove any packaging cucumbers were purchased in. Rinse well. If there are any mushy or moldy spots, cut them off and eat cucumber that day. If cucumbers are clean and fresh, they're ready to store.
2. Keep Dry | Make sure cucumbers are completely dry before storing them. Once dry, wrap cucumbers in a clean dish towel or paper towel to prevent sogginess or mold. The same technique works perfectly well for leafy greens, herbs, and other sensitive vegetables.
3. Store Inside A Bag | Place dry, wrapped cucumbers inside a plastic bag. Keep plastic bag open at the top to promote airflow and lessen condensation which causes sogginess and deterioration.
(Source: Epicurious)

Cooking Tips

- Although cucumbers are often eaten raw, they can be baked in the oven, boiled, or sautéed on the stovetop.
- Removing the seeds from cucumbers is not necessary but some people prefer to and some recipes ask that you do. To de-seed: slice the cucumber in half lengthwise and run a spoon down the center of the cucumber, scooping out the seeds.
- It is not necessary to peel cucumbers; in fact the skin is a good source of dietary fiber. However, if you choose not to peel, make sure to wash the cucumber before use.

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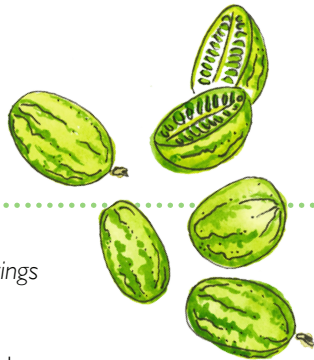
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Varieties

It might surprise you to know that cucumbers come in a number of varieties including: Armenian, Diva, English Telegraph, and Green Burpless. Differences between varieties include skin thickness, size, seedless or with seeds and varying shades of green.

Selection Tip

Choose cucumbers that are bright green with even-looking skin, without dullness or sweating. Test for firmness and avoid cucumbers with soft spots or bruises.



Recipes

Cucumber Raita

Cucumber Raita

Yield: 100 Taste Test Servings

Ingredients:

- 12 large cucumbers, peeled
- 12 cups plain Greek yogurt
- 2 Tablespoons cayenne
- 1 ½ cups chopped cilantro
- 2 Tablespoons Garam masala
- Salt
- 6 small Serrano peppers or Thai chili peppers, minced (optional)

Directions:

1. Cut cucumber lengthwise and remove seeds. Dice into very small pieces.
2. Sprinkle with salt, toss and let sit in a colander in sink for 15 minutes.
3. Rinse briefly and squeeze dry in a kitchen towel. Transfer to a bowl.
4. Beat yogurt with a fork or whisk and add cayenne and Garam masala
5. Toss with cucumbers, cilantro and chili. Taste and adjust seasoning.
6. Chill until ready to serve

Source: *New York Times*

Thai Cucumber Salad

Thai Cucumber Salad with Roasted Peanuts

Yield: 100 Taste Test Servings

Ingredients:

- 4 cups fresh lime juice
- ¾ cup fish sauce
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¾ cup minced seeded jalapeno chili (about 2 medium)
- 1 head garlic, cloves minced
- 12 cucumbers (preferably English hothouse), halved, seeded, thinly sliced
- 6 cups sliced red onion
- ½ cup chopped fresh mint
- ½ cup coarsely chopped lightly salted roasted peanuts

Directions:

1. Whisk first 5 ingredients in medium bowl.
2. Place cucumbers, onion, and mint in large bowl.
3. Add dressing and toss to coat.
4. Season salad to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Sprinkle with peanuts and serve.

Source: *Bon Appetit*

Cucumber Salad with Soy, Ginger & Garlic

Cucumber Salad with Soy, Ginger & Garlic

Yield: 100 Taste Test Servings

Ingredients:

- 25 large cucumbers, sliced thin
- 2 1/3 cups seasoned rice vinegar
- ¾ cups soy sauce
- ¼ cup sugar
- 12 small garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ cup minced fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons cayenne
- Fresh ground pepper to taste
- 1 ½ cups sesame oil
- 2 ½ cups oil (sunflower oil, grapeseed oil or other)
- 7 bunches scallions, sliced very thin
- 1 ½ cups chopped cilantro
- Salt to taste

Directions:

1. Sprinkle cucumbers with salt, toss, and let sit in a colander in sink for 15 minutes.
2. Rinse briefly and squeeze dry in a kitchen towel. Transfer to a bowl.
3. Whisk together vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, garlic, ginger, cayenne, and pepper.
4. Whisk in the sesame oil, and sunflower or grapeseed oil (or other)
5. Toss with the cucumbers, scallions, and cilantro.
6. Chill until ready to serve.

Source: *New York Times*