

Cucumbers

Cucumbers have been cultivated for over 3,000 years. They originated in India, and the earliest record of cultivation in North America dates back to the 16th century.

The cucumber belongs to the Cucurbitaceae family. Its relatives include watermelon, muskmelon, pumpkin, and squash.

There are three varieties of cucumbers – slicing, pickling, and burpless. Pickling cucumbers often have a thicker, bumpier skin. Burpless have a thinner skin, more pleasant taste, and are easier to digest, which gives them the name “burpless”.

CULINARY TIPS

- Cucumbers are excellent paired with dill, garlic, or mint, and a bit of acid (vinegar or lemon juice)
- Leave the peel on for added fiber, potassium, and Vitamin K!
- Pickling is a great way to preserve the harvest and enjoy cucumbers year-round! You can use slicing cucumbers for pickles, but they may turn out a bit softer than pickles made with pickling cucumbers.
- Blend cucumber with yogurt, a complementary flavor, and acid to make a dip or a soup.

HOW TO STORE CUCUMBERS

Cucumbers store best at 50° Fahrenheit. They will last several days if kept in the crisper drawer in the refrigerator. Wrapping them in a moist towel or paper towel will help them last a day or two longer. You may also consider leaving them out on the counter if they're going to be used within 1–2 days.

3 WAYS TO PREPARE CUCUMBERS

- Pickle! Make a quick refrigerator pickle or try lacto-fermenting.
- Sauté! Chop the cucumber and sauté it in butter with dill for 5 minutes, until slightly tender.
- Make a cucumber salad! Thinly slice cucumber and onions, then add salt, rice vinegar, and pepper flakes, to taste.

CUCUMBER SOUP

This soup is perfect for summer dinners! A light and cooling vegetable, cucumbers help us replenish the fluids and minerals lost in our perspiration, leaving us “cool as a cucumber.” Serves 3–4.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb cucumbers washed well, halved and seeded, coarsely chopped
1 c. plain yogurt
2 T lemon juice
1 clove garlic
3 scallions (white and light green part, cut into ½ inch lengths)
3T fresh dill, chopped
2 T good olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Reserve 1 c. of the chopped cucumbers. Place the remaining cucumbers in a blender or food processor with the yogurt, lemon juice, garlic, scallions, 2 T of dill and olive oil. Blend until smooth. Chill soup for at least 2 hours (preferably overnight) before serving. Finely chop the reserved cucumber. Drizzle a bit of olive oil on each serving and garnish with finely chopped cucumber and extra dill.