



Cucumber

Growing and Harvest Information

Cucumbers require a long growing season and are usually ready for harvest 50-75 days after planting. Sow seeds at least 2 weeks after the last spring frost, in well-drained, moist soil and full sun. Add compost to enrich the soil. Plant seeds 1 inch deep and 3-5 feet apart for bush varieties and 1 foot apart for vine varieties. Add mulch later to retain soil moisture. Use trellising for vine varieties and water cucumber plants consistently.

Harvest cucumbers when they are 6-8 inches long. Cut cucumbers off the vine with a sharp knife, leaving at least 1 inch of stem. Wear gloves to protect your hands from prickly leafstalks and stems! Overripe cucumbers have a bitter taste, so be sure to harvest them as they are ready to avoid over-ripening.

Introduction

The cucumber is a tender, warm-season vegetable that produces quickly when watering is consistent. When watering is irregular or insufficient, plants produce oddly-shaped and poor-tasting cucumbers. Cucumbers are great for hydration, detoxification and getting rid of bad breath.

Preparation & Storage

Storing:

- Refrigerate cucumbers immediately after harvesting. Store for up to 3 days in open or perforated plastic bags.
- If cooking cucumbers, soak in salt water first to remove some of the naturally high water content and prevent dilution of the dish.
- Do not peel to increase nutritional value.

Freezing (sweet pickles):

- Mix 2 qts cucumbers (peeled and thinly sliced), 1 onion (thinly sliced) and 1 tbsp salt in a large bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Leave for 2 hours and drain.
- Combine 1-1/2 cups sugar and 1/2 cup white distilled vinegar. Stir well and pour over cucumbers.
- Pack into air-tight freezer bags or containers and immediately place in freezer. Pickles are ready to eat in 3-4 days.

Pickling:

- Boil 3 cups water, 3 cups vinegar, and 6 tbsp salt.
- In a 1-quart jar place a layer of dill, 1 clove of garlic, and 1/2 tbsp of mustard seed.
- Wash cucumbers and add to jar. Add another layer of dill when halfway full.
- Pour hot water into jars, leaving 1/2 inch of head space. Seal and process in a boiling water bath for 15 minutes.
- Makes 2 1-quart jars.

Nutritional Benefits

Source	Rating
Vitamins	GOOD
Mineral	MODERATE
Fiber	MODERATE

Use By Guide

Vegetable State	Use by
Raw	3 days
Freezing	1 year
Pickled	1 year

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Fun Fact:

Cucumbers are over 90% water, so they are very low in nutrients. The green peel is actually the most nutritional part! It contains some fiber and vitamin A.

Prepare Cucumber Like This:

Raw
Pickled
Juiced
Grilled

Try Cucumber In:

Dressings
Salads
Slaws
Soups
Pastas
Smoothies
Drinking water

Preparation

Recipe 1: Cucumber Salad

Ingredients

- 2 cucumbers, cubed
- 1/2 cup red onion, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
- 1 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh oregano, chopped
- salt and pepper

Directions

1. *Mix ingredients in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.*
2. *Toss with your favorite vinaigrette or olive oil (optional).*
3. *Best when served chilled.*

Recipe 2: Chilled Cucumber-Tahini & Herb Soup

Ingredients

For Soup

- 2 medium cucumbers, peeled and cubed
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup each of fresh dill, basil and parsley
- 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/8 tsp cayenne
- 4-6 ice cubes
- salt and pepper, to taste

For chickpeas

- 1 (15 oz.) can chickpeas, rinsed, drained and patted dry
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Directions

1. *Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Toss chickpeas in seasoning and place in a single layer on well-greased baking sheet. Bake until brown, about 15-20 minutes.*
2. *Place all soup ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. If necessary, add a little water to thin. Season with salt and pepper to taste.*
3. *Serve soup chilled. Top with chickpeas and garnish with more fresh herbs.*