A cucumber is a fruit, part of the gourd family, Cucurbitaceae that also includes squash, melons, and gourds. Cucumbers grow from a creeping vine that roots in a sandy soil, it grows up trellises (supporting frames) and contains large leaves that form a canopy over the fruit. Although cucumbers are a fruit, they are prepared and eaten as vegetables, much like tomatoes and squash. Cucumbers contain 90% of water and are a good source of Vitamin A and C, potassium, manganese, dietary fiber and magnesium.

Selection

There are a variety of cucumbers to choose from, each offering their own unique distinguishable traits.

**Armenian Cucumbers:**
- Shape: Long and Thin
- Color: Variegated in darker and lighter shades of light green or yellowish-green
- Flavor: Fresh
- Best Eaten: Raw
- Pickling: NO

**English Cucumbers**
- Shape: Long and Thin
- Color: Dark Green
- Flavor: Almost non-existent
- Best Eaten: Raw
- Pickling: NO

**Garden Cucumbers**
- Shape: Thick and smooth outer skin
- Color: Dark Green
- Flavor: Mild, almost non-existent flavor
- Best Eaten: Due to waxy coating, it is recommended that his type of cucumber be peeled before eating.
- Pickling: YES

**Kirby Cucumbers**
- Shape: Short and thick
- Color: Dark green
- Flavor: Fresh and almost non-existent
- Best Eaten: Raw or in pickled form
- Pickling: YES

**Lemon Cucumbers**
- Shape: Look similar to a lemon, round with thin skin
- Color: Yellow
- Flavor: Sweet taste
- Best Eaten: Raw or pickled
- Pickling: YES

**Persian Cucumbers**
- Shape: Similar to the English Cucumber, but shorter and bumpier
- Color: Dark Green
- Flavor: Non-existent
- Best Eaten: Raw
- Pickling: NO

Nutrition Information

In ½ cup of cucumber slices with peel included, there are...

- 8 calories
- 1 mg of Sodium
- 2 g total Carbohydrate
- 1 g of Sugar
- 1 percent Calcium
- 1 percent Iron
- 2 percent Vitamin C

Cucumbers are low in saturate fat, cholesterol and sodium.

Cucumbers are a great sources of...

- Vitamin A
- Pantothenic Acid
- Magnesium
- Phosphorus
- Manganese
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin K
- Potassium
Cucumber

Handling and Storage

Unpeeled cucumbers should be washed in cold water to remove any soil or other remaining dirt. Cucumbers should be refrigerated in a plastic bag as soon as possible after purchase. They should be kept for about a week under these conditions.

Preparing Raw

Cucumbers are best in this form, peeled or unpeeled, and are traditionally used in salads or vegetable trays.

When Cooked

Cucumbers can be sliced, dipped in batter and friend until crisp and later flavored with a little olive oil and herbs. They can also be added to soups and stews.

Baked

Cucumbers can be stuffed and baked. Utilizing the shell, hallow out the entire shell by chopping the inner cucumber and fill with desired filling.

Preservation: Freezing and Drying

Cucumbers when frozen should be sliced or chopped, covered with vinegar and frozen. Also, cucumbers can be dried. However, their seeds are dried rather than the cucumber itself.
2. Watermelon-Cucumber Popsicles
Servings: 10-12
From: Chef Deborah Racicot

**Ingredients**
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 pounds seedless watermelon
- 1 pound cucumber
- 2 limes, juiced
- Dash of salt

**Directions**
1. Place the sugar and 2 cups of water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Set aside to cool completely.
2. Cut the watermelon into chunks, discarding the rind.
3. Peel the cucumbers, and cut into pieces.
4. Puree each in a blender (4 cups of watermelon puree and 2 cups of cucumber should be produced).
5. Combine the two purées with 2 cups of sugar syrup and blend until smooth.
6. Strain the mixture through a sieve to remove any remaining lumps.
7. Stir in the lime juice and a pinch of salt.
8. Pour the mixture into Popsicle molds, and freeze for several hours until hard.

3. Gloria Logue’s Cucumber Avocado Dip
From: George R. McTyre
B’s Cucumber Pages, April 21, 2002

**Ingredients**
- 1 tomato
- 2 cucumbers
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 package dried Italian salad dressing mix
- 1 avocado, peeled and diced

**Directions**
1. Peel, seed and dice tomato
2. Peel, split lengthwise, seed and dice cucumbers.
3. Thoroughly drain all liquid from tomato and cucumbers.
4. Mix all ingredients and chill before serving.
5. Serve with chips or vegetables.

4. Cucumber, Tomato, Mint Salad
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Servings: 5
Inspired by Paula Dean, Food Network

**Ingredients**
- 10 ounces goat cheese
- 2 to 4 ripe tomatoes
- 4 medium sized cucumbers, thinly sliced
- 2 small white onions (Vidalia will work great for this if they are available), julienched
- 20 mint leaves, chiffonade-style
- ½ cup white vinegar
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

**Directions**
1. In a large mixing bowl, crumble the goat cheese.
2. Add tomatoes, cucumbers, and onions to the bowl.
3. Cut mint leaves, chiffonade-style into shreds and add to the salad.
4. Add vinegar and olive oil and mix well.
5. Add salt and pepper to taste.
6. Refrigerate for 1 hour, and then serve.

5. Spicy Pickled Cucumbers
Prep Time: 10 minutes
Servings: 6-8
From: Tyler Florence, Food Network

**Ingredients**
- 4 Kirby cucumbers or 2 regular cucumbers, sliced thin
- 2 fresh red Thai Chilies, seeded and sliced thin
- 1 handful of fresh mint
- ½ cup rice wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt

**Directions**
1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well.
2. Let sit for at least 1 hour for the flavors to blend.
3. Taste and adjust the seasoning.
4. Will keep in the refrigerator for 3 days.