Cucumber

Background:
Crunchy, refreshing, and cool mouthfeel
Goes great in salads, sandwiches, dips, and drinks
Different types of cucumbers include: English (seedless), garden, Kirby, and Persian, which differentiate by their growing seasons and eating conditions
Typically consumed raw but can be sautéed, baked, or boiled
Found in American, Indian, Asian, and Mediterranean cuisines

Nutritional Value:
Cucumbers have over 90% water content, and therefore are very low in calories and can help meet hydration recommendations
Cucumbers contain the following micronutrients:

* Vitamin K*—aids in bone health and blood clotting. 1 cup of cucumbers can provide up to 11% of daily vitamin K needs

* B vitamins*—necessary in red blood cell production and energy metabolism; *folate* and *B9* are highest in cucumbers

* Potassium*—important in heart activity and muscle contraction

* Phytonutrients flavonoids* and *lignans*—good for heart health and have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory characteristics
Cucumber

How to SHOP:
Find fresh cucumbers in the grocery store near other green vegetables in the produce section
Look for ripe cucumbers that have firm, green flesh without blemishes, soft spots, or wrinkles
Fresh cucumbers are available in Texas from May to November
Pickled cucumbers can be found in preserved aisles and are available year-round

How to GROW:
Cucumbers have a long growing season of around 2 months
Grow best in warm, humid climates from 60-90°F, making Texas a perfect growing location
Generally low maintenance crop but require space, loose and moist soil, and sunlight
Vines grow fast so frequent trimming is necessary. Use cages or other vertical support to encourage air circulation and growth.
Harvest cucumbers when 2-8” long and medium to dark green. Overgrown cucumbers are yellow

How to STORE:
Store cucumbers away from bananas, melons, and tomatoes to prevent spoilage from ethylene gas
Increase storage time by storing cucumbers in the refrigerator up to one week in a loose plastic bag
Cucumber Roll-Ups

INGREDIENTS:
- 2 seedless cucumbers
- 1 cup hummus
- 1/2 cup sun-dried tomato sauce

DIRECTIONS:
- Slice cucumber into ribbons using a vegetable peeler or mandolin.
- Spread thin layer of hummus in the middle of the cucumber slice and roll.
- Top the cucumber roll-up with a dollop of sun-dried tomato sauce and serve.

HELPFUL TIPS:
- Carefully slice the cucumber to keep the ribbons in tact.
- Try stacking multiple ribbon slices to make a thicker cucumber roll-up.
Chinese Cucumber Salad

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 English or seedless cucumbers
- 1/2 tsp. honey
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 tsp. sesame oil
- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce

DIRECTIONS:

Place cucumber onto cutting board and use tenderizer to crush it.

Cut cucumber into bite-sized pieces and place in large bowl. Add garlic to cucumber.

In separate small bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients to make a sauce.

Pour prepared sauce over the cucumber, stir and serve.

HELPFUL TIPS:

Dry the cucumber with a paper towel to reduce excess water.

For an extra punch of flavor, add crushed red pepper flakes when mixing the sauce.
Cucumber Yogurt Tzatziki Sauce

INGREDIENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 seedless cucumber</td>
<td>1 Tbsp. lemon juice</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 garlic cloves, minced</td>
<td>1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 tsp. salt</td>
<td>1/2 tsp. ground black pepper</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 cup plain low-fat Greek yogurt</td>
<td>1 Tbsp. fresh dill, finely chopped</td>
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DIRECTIONS:

Peel cucumber and grate or finely chop to have very small pieces of cucumber. Squeeze with paper towel or cheese cloth to remove some of the moisture from the cucumber. Discard juices and put strained cucumber in medium bowl.

Add the remaining ingredients to the cucumber and stir to combine.

Cover bowl and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Add salt to taste, if necessary. Serve as a dip or sauce.

HELPFUL TIPS:

Chilling the tzatziki sauce is important for the flavors to blend together.

Don’t have fresh dill? Substitute with 1 teaspoon dried dill weed.