

# BUY FRESH - BUY LOCAL

## Food of the Week: Cucumber

### History

One of the signs of summer is when gardens begin to produce delicious, crisp cucumbers. History tells us that people have been enjoying cucumbers since ancient Egyptian times. Cucumbers actually helped keep those traveling across dry Egyptian deserts hydrated. Egyptian travelers would eat the cucumber flesh but keep the skin intact so it could be used as a canteen to keep water cool. After voyages to eastern lands, Alexander the Great brought cucumbers back to Europe and Julius Caesar brought them to Rome. Christopher Columbus brought the vegetable with him on his journey to the Americas, and by 1494, the cucumber was flourishing in the lands of Haiti. From there, the cucumber found its way all over South and North American lands. The cucumber became very popular in North America after the European settlers brought more along with them.

Adapted from: Cornell Cooperative Extension/Yates County, <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/~yates/mg6.13.01.htm>

**Availability** – The best season for cucumbers is during the summer months of May through July. However, cucumbers can now be found at the grocery stores year round.

**Selection** – Make sure to select cucumbers that have been stored at cool temperatures, as they are susceptible to heat damage. The skin should be deep green in color and free of yellow spots and wrinkles at the tips. When pressing the cucumber with your thumb, the flesh should be firm, not soft.

**Storage** – Cucumbers should always be refrigerated and can usually be stored for 4-5 days. If you only use a portion of the cucumber, tightly wrap the remainder of the cucumber in a plastic bag.

### Nutrition

Cucumbers not only contain a lot of water but they also contain vitamin C, fiber, potassium, and magnesium. Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that can help fight heart disease, inflammation, and certain forms of cancer. Fiber helps with regularity and can help decrease cholesterol in the blood. Potassium and magnesium both play a role in regulating blood pressure. Besides being nutritious, cucumbers are very refreshing and can make a great addition to any summertime meal! Adapted from: The World's Healthiest Foods,

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=42>

Nutrient analysis of one cup sliced cucumber with seeds & skin: calories: 14, fat: <0g, cholesterol: 0mg, protein: 1g, carbohydrate: 3g, sodium: 2mg, potassium: 150mg, vitamin A: 224 IU, vitamin C: 6mg, fiber: 1g, folate: 14mcg

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**Recipe of the Week:  
Cucumber and Tomato Country Salad**

**Ingredients:**

4 ripe medium-sized tomatoes  
3 medium cucumbers  
½ medium onion  
¼ cup white vinegar  
½ cup granulated sugar  
½ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. ground pepper  
¼ cup crushed ice or cubes

**Preparation:**

1. Cut tomatoes into ¾-inch cubes and place in serving bowl. Remove part of the cucumber peel in lengthwise strips. Cut each cucumber into quarters, lengthwise, and then remove extra coarse seeds, if any. Cut into ¾-inch cubes. Cut onion into uniform sized cubes and combine with all vegetables.  
2. Mix remaining ingredients, pour over vegetable cubes and toss well to dissolve sugar and salt. Allow to stand for 15 minutes or more to marinate. Serve chilled. Makes 4 - 1 ¼ cup servings.

**Chef's Notes:** This salad holds well up to two days. If this salad is made using a finer dice, it makes for a delicious sandwich filling, heaped on crusty bread.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories: 157, fat: 1g, cholesterol: 0mg, protein: 3g, carbohydrate: 38g, sodium: 307mg, potassium: 632mg, vitamin K: 51mcg, vitamin A: 1252 IU, vitamin C: 37mg, fiber: 4g, folate: 52mcg

Recipe source: Produce for Better Health Foundation. For more, please visit: <http://www.5aday.com/>

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