

# Cucumbers

## Choosing, Storing, Preparing, and Enjoying

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Cucumbers are refreshing and delicious. They support our health by providing hydration, fiber, and some nutrients to our eating patterns. Cucumbers generally fall into three groups: slicing cucumbers, pickling cucumbers, or seedless cucumbers. Consider the points below when choosing, storing, and preparing cucumbers so they can be enjoyed in a variety of ways.

### Choosing Cucumbers

When selecting cucumbers, look for:

- Firm, green cucumbers with no yellowing or soft spots. The small white spines on the surface rub off easily.
- One- to 4-inch cucumbers are preferred for pickling. Pickling cucumbers usually have small black spines on the surface. These varieties are less prone to bloating or hollowing during the pickling process.

### Storing Cucumbers

To extend the life of fresh cucumber, save food dollars, and enjoy the best flavor and texture, consider these storage tips:

- Store unwashed cucumbers in the refrigerator.
- Use ripe cucumbers within a week.
- Wash cucumbers just before using them.
- Sliced cucumbers should be wrapped or sealed and used within three to five days.

### Preparing Cucumbers

Always wash fresh cucumbers under cool running water, wiping off visible signs of dirt. Cucumbers can be peeled. However, most of the fiber is contained in the peel, so leave it on when you can. Soak cucumbers in saltwater before using them in salads. This method prevents cucumbers from losing their water content, which will dilute salad dressing. Cucumbers are complementary with dill, mint, and parsley, so these herbs make good flavorings.

**Cucumbers work together with other foods in a balanced eating pattern to support our health in a variety of ways**



### Enjoying Cucumbers

Cucumbers may be enjoyed fresh, pickled, or added to dishes. They can be sliced and enjoyed on their own or with a dip. Cucumbers may be pickled to enjoy now or preserved to enjoy later. They are often added to salads for a refreshing crunch or added to water to quench thirst. Cucumbers can also be sautéed and enjoyed in a hot dish, such as stir fry.



## Recipes

### Italian Cucumber Salad

#### Yield: 6 servings

- 2 medium cucumbers, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup sliced red onion
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper
- 1/2 cup Italian dressing
- In a large bowl, combine all the ingredients. Cover and refrigerate until serving.
- Serve with slotted spoon.

Per serving: 106 calories; 8 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 340 milligrams sodium; 8 grams carbohydrate; 2 grams protein

### Creamy Cucumber and Chicken Salad

#### Yield: 8 servings

- 1/2 pound chicken breast
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup slivered almonds
- 1/2 cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- 3 ounces reduced fat cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped dill
- 2 medium cucumbers, chopped
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 8 lettuce leaves
- Marinate chicken breast in lemon juice for one hour. Remove chicken from marinade and chop into bite sized pieces.
- Sauté in preheated non-stick skillet until thoroughly cooked and no longer pink in the center. Set aside to cool.
- Toast slivered almonds on low heat in a non-stick skillet until fragrant. Set aside to cool.
- In a large mixing bowl combine yogurt, cream cheese, mustard, salt, pepper, and dill. Add chicken and toss. Add cucumbers, cranberries, and almonds to chicken mixture. Toss to coat. Cover and chill in refrigerator for 1 hour.
- Spoon salad into washed and dried lettuce leaves. Serve cold.

Per serving: 210 calories; 10 grams total fat; 30 milligrams cholesterol; 290 milligrams sodium; 19 grams carbohydrate; 12 grams protein

### Turkey Meatball Wraps

#### Yield: 6 servings

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped
- 1 egg
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and chopped
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Cooking spray
- 1/4 cup quick cook oats (if meatball mixture is too wet, add oats to help bind)
- 1/2 cup nonfat sour cream, or plain Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup cucumber, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 6, 10-inch flour tortillas
- 1 cup tomato, chopped
- Lettuce leaves, torn
- Sliced cucumber (optional if you have cucumber left over)

- In a large bowl, combine turkey, onion, egg, salt, pepper, oregano, parsley, garlic, and lemon juice. Mix until it forms a ball and sticks together. If the meatball mixture is too wet, add quick cook oats.
- Spray a large skillet with non-stick cooking spray, and shape meatball mixture into 1-inch balls. Place in skillet over medium high heat. Cook each side for several minutes until meatballs are browned evenly. Remove from pan.
- In a small bowl, combine sour cream (or yogurt), cucumber, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Stir until combined.
- Warm tortillas in microwave (approximately 20 seconds). Place three meatballs on each.

Per serving: 360 calories; 12 grams fat; 85 milligrams cholesterol; 820 milligrams sodium; 42 grams carbohydrate; 22 grams protein

### Strawberry Cucumber Water

#### Yield: 8 servings

- 1 cup of strawberries, fresh or thawed frozen
- 1 small cucumber
- 2 quarts water
- Place strawberries in the bottom of a 2-quart (or larger) pitcher. With the back of a wooden spoon, lightly mash the strawberries to release the flavor.
- Thinly slice cucumber and place in pitcher.
- Fill pitcher with water, and mix to combine the fruit and water. Chill several hours or overnight for best results.
- Serve over ice.

Per serving: 10 calories; 0 grams fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 0 milligrams sodium; 2 grams carbohydrate; 0 grams protein

## References

- Avizienis, A., Lawrence, K., and Cornish-Keefe, S. (2019). *The Fruit and Vegetable Bible*. Moseley Road Inc.
- Duyff, Roberta Larson (2017). *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Complete Food and Nutrition Guide*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Foundation for Fresh Produce. Cucumber. Have a Plant. Retrieved from: <https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/cucumber/>.

## Resources

For information about growing produce, check out Kentucky State University's Gardening Fact Sheets at <https://www.planeatmove.com/get-moving/growing-your-own-garden/>. Cucumbers can be found [here](#).

For more information on using fresh cucumber, consider Plate It Up! Kentucky Proud recipes: <https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/plate-it-kentucky-proud>

The recipes listed can be found at [Plan.Eat.Move.com](https://www.planeatmove.com), where you can find additional recipes using cucumber in a variety of ways.

For more information on preserving food, check with your local county Extension office.

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