



## About Cucumber History

The cucumber probably originated in India. From there, it traveled to Greece and Italy, where it gained popularity with the Romans. It is thought the Romans helped the cucumber spread throughout Europe. In 1494, Spaniards took the cucumber to Haiti and later to Florida. They also taught the Native Americans to garden. In turn, colonists in New England learned many gardening techniques from the Native Americans and purportedly grew cucumbers. Cucumbers were first documented as varieties in 1806. The cucumber has been modified significantly since that time.

## The Plant

The cucumber is technically a fruit because it flowers and contains its seeds inside. The cucumber is a member of the squash family. Cucumbers are a good source of vitamin A, potassium, manganese, folate, dietary fiber, and magnesium. They also contain compounds called sterols, which have been shown to lower cholesterol in animals. Sterols are most heavily concentrated in the skin of the cucumber. Cucumbers aid digestion and have very few calories per serving.

## How to Buy

Select cucumbers that are firm, well-shaped, and vibrant green. The skin should be firm and free of soft or yellow spots. Many cucumbers in grocery stores are shiny and waxed. Choose unwaxed cucumbers to avoid eating the wax and chemicals trapped in the wax.

## How to Prepare

Nutrient-rich, unwaxed cucumber skins can be eaten. Peel waxed cucumbers before eating. All cucumbers should be washed prior to eating. Cucumbers can be diced, cut into sticks, sliced, or shredded. Cucumber seeds are edible and nutritious. If you prefer not to eat them, cut the cucumber lengthwise and scoop out the seeds with a spoon.

In addition to being included in a traditional salad, diced cucumbers can be used in tuna or chicken salad recipes. Shredded cucumbers make an attractive garnish or a cool addition to soups or pasta salads. Cucumbers can be pureed for a cold summer gazpacho. Sliced thick, they can be used as a serving tool for appetizers. Some excellent cucumber sauces are available, and some lovely cool summer drinks can be made from cucumbers. Cucumbers also have been used for more than 400 years as facial masks and peels.

## How to Store

Storing cucumbers in a refrigerator is recommended to keep them for several days. Once a cucumber is cut, wrap it in plastic and place it in a plastic container to keep it from drying out. For best taste and nutrition, cucumbers should be used within one or two days. If cucumbers are left at room temperature, they will spoil much faster, lose flavor, and become limp.

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