



# Fresh Friday

November 2011

## Cucumber



### Fresh Facts

Although often called a **vegetable**, the cucumber is actually a fruit related to gourds and melons.

**Cucumbers may make you burp** because they contain a substance called cucurbitacin, which also gives them a bitter taste. Varieties known as "burpless" cucumbers, with lower amounts of cucurbitacin, are prized for their milder or sweeter flavor, thinner skin and fewer seeds.

**Cucumbers are low in calories**, and a source of fiber and vitamins C and K. When eaten with the skin, they also provide vitamin A.

**Peak season for cucumbers** is May-August, but some types are available year round.

### Did you know?

**There is a marine animal called a sea cucumber because of its similar shape. Like starfish and sea urchins, sea cucumbers are "echinoderms" with soft bodies. They live on the ocean floor and feed on algae and other tiny particles.**

## Try this at home:

### Make a cucumber racecar!

#### What you'll need:

- vegetable peeler
  - spoon
  - toothpicks
  - cucumber (the car)
  - carrot (the wheels)
  - cherry tomato or radish (the driver)
- optional: peanut butter or cream cheese

**Step 1:** Wash the cucumber, then use a vegetable peeler to peel stripes on the sides of your cucumber car.

**Step 2:** Wash the carrot and slice it crosswise to make ¼-inch thick circles for the wheels.

**Step 3:** Use the spoon to scoop out a driver's seat on the top of the cucumber. (Peanut butter or cream cheese will help it stick.) Place the cherry tomato or radish in the driver's seat.

**Step 4:** Use the toothpicks to attach the wheels.

# Recipes

## **Easy Tzatziki (Cucumber-Yogurt Dip)**

2 c. thick Greek yogurt (Fage, Chobani or similar)  
1 large English cucumber, seeded and grated  
1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
1 tbsp. mint, finely chopped  
1 tbsp. dill, finely chopped  
1 oz. lemon juice  
salt and pepper to taste

Peel cucumber, slice it lengthwise, scrape out the seeds with a spoon, then grate it. Place grated cucumber in a strainer and press firmly to squeeze out the liquid. Combine with remaining ingredients in a bowl. Refrigerate dip at least two hours or overnight (so flavors can develop) before serving. Serve with pita, carrot and celery sticks, cherry tomatoes and other dippers. Also makes an excellent sauce for fish.

## **Asian Cucumber Simple Salad**

1 English cucumber, thinly sliced  
1 tsp. sugar  
1/4 c. rice vinegar  
1/4 tsp. salt  
optional ingredients:  
1 tsp. fresh dill, minced  
1/2 tsp. jalapeño or serrano pepper, minced

Peel cucumber if desired (if you like the skin, it looks pretty to leave it on), slice cucumber lengthwise and scrape out the seeds with a spoon. Using a food processor or sharp knife, cut into very thin slices. Place in a double layer of paper towel and squeeze gently to remove excess moisture. Combine vinegar, sugar and salt in a medium bowl and stir until sugar and salt dissolve. Add the cucumber slices and optional ingredients. Toss well to combine and serve.

## **Tropical Gazpacho**

4 garlic cloves, minced or pressed  
1 English cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced  
1 medium red pepper, diced  
1 small red onion, diced  
2 medium tomatoes, diced  
1 c. canned unsweetened pineapple chunks in juice  
2 tbsp. red wine vinegar  
1 tsp. ground cumin  
3 c. tomato juice  
salt and pepper to taste  
optional: generous pinch cayenne, or more to taste

Dice the fresh fruits and veggies, then set aside half of the diced cucumber, bell peppers and tomatoes. Put the other half along with all remaining ingredients in a blender or food processor. Puree until smooth. Transfer to a bowl, then stir in the remaining diced vegetables. Add salt and black pepper to taste. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to one day before serving.

*Adapted from: Moosewood Restaurant Low-Fat Favorites*

## **Pickle Jar Jar**

2 c. white vinegar  
1 c. sugar  
2 large cucumbers, sliced lengthwise  
3 large carrots, sliced lengthwise  
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
2 quart-size jars

Whisk vinegar and sugar until dissolved. Cut washed cucumbers and peeled carrots into lengthwise spears. Trim to fit inside jar. Pack vegetables into the quart-size jars. Slice the garlic cloves thinly and add to the jars. Pour vinegar and sugar mixture into jars, and if you run out of liquid, top off with cool water. Refrigerate for at least 2 days, then enjoy.

*Adapted from: The Complete Star Wars Cookbook, Text by Robin Davis, Frankie Frankeny, Wesley Martin, Chronicle Books, San Francisco 2010*