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Keep Cool with Cucumbers



We hear it all the time... and I've probably said it to you before too... drink more water! But, did you know there are other hydration options? You can get some water from the foods you eat too! Specifically fruits or vegetables that are comprised of a lot of water. Some options are melons and tomatoes – but today, it's all about cucumbers, since gardens are seeing an explosion of them.

Cucumbers originated in India over 4,000 years ago. In 1492 cucumbers made it to the Western Hemisphere with a fellow named Christopher Columbus, and as they say, the rest is history.

The health benefits of cucumbers begin with their role as a low fat & low calorie vegetable. They are also free from sodium, gluten, and cholesterol. The vitamins and minerals you get from cucumbers include Vitamin K, Vitamin C, and Potassium. These help regulate blood clotting and pressure, and provide a boost to your immune system. They also contain up to 96 percent water – this helps them stay cool, and provided the background for the saying “cool as a cucumber.”

According to the USDA, 1/2 cup of cucumbers, sliced, with the peel on, has only 8 calories! That fact, combined with their high water content, makes them a great choice for summer snacking. As I'm sure many of you know, you can eat cucumbers as they are, with either the skin on or off. Or, you can mix them with vinegar, tomatoes and/or onions in a fresh summer salad popular in the Midwest. Pickles are made from cucumbers as well. You can make refrigerator pickles with simple ingredients and supplies. Here is the recipe, copied from Oregon State University's SNAP-Ed site, <https://foodhero.org/recipes/refrigerator-pickled-cucumbers>.

Refrigerator Pickled Cucumbers

Ingredients

2/3 cup vinegar (any type)
1/3 cup water
1 teaspoon salt
2 to 4 teaspoons sugar
1 to 2 Tablespoons seasonings (see Notes)
1 1/2 cups cucumber slices

Directions

1. In a small saucepan, heat the vinegar, water, salt and sugar until the mixture simmers. Stir until the salt and sugar are dissolved and remove from heat.
2. Place the seasonings in the bottom of a clean pint-sized glass jar. Add the cucumber slices, packing them closely together. Leave about 1/2-inch space at the top of the jar.
3. Fill the jar with the warm vinegar mixture to cover the cucumbers. Close the jar with a clean lid and refrigerate for 1 to 3 days to allow flavors to develop.
4. Store pickles in the refrigerator. Use within 3 months.

Notes

- Ideas for fresh seasonings: basil, cilantro, dill, garlic, ginger, hot pepper, onion, oregano, thyme.
- Ideas for dry seasonings: bay leaf, celery, cumin or dill seed, dried chili, peppercorn, pickling spice, turmeric
- Try this: 1 clove garlic, 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes and 1 teaspoon dill seed.

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