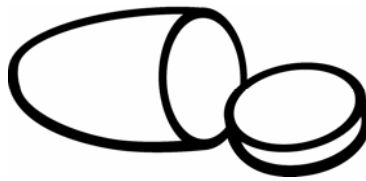


JANUARY – Featured Fruit: CUCUMBER



WASH. SLICE. EAT.

(how easy is that?)

The cucumber is a member of the same family as gourds, melons, and squash. Cucumbers are a long green vegetable that grows on a crawling vine. One plant can grow eight or more cucumbers. Their skins are green and the flesh is white. Cucumbers are largely water. They are crisp when you bite into them. They are low in calories and have small amounts of vitamins A and C.

Facts

Although the cucumber is botanically a fruit, it is more commonly thought of and used as a vegetable.

"Cool as a cucumber" isn't just a catchy phrase. The inner temperature of a cucumber can be up to 20 degrees cooler than the outside air. No wonder these are such a summertime favorite!

Once considered mere animal fodder, "cukes" are now an important commercial and garden vegetable.

The smallest variety of cucumbers is the gherkin, which is only one or two inches long.

Distinct male and female flowers develop on one cucumber plant, and pollen is carried by insects; 10 to 20 bee visits per flower per day are required to produce long, straight fruit.

History

The cucumber is believed to have originated in wild form in the mountains of northern India, where a similar wild species still grows and spread through Greece and Italy. They were brought to the Americas by Christopher Columbus. They made their way into North American agriculture by the mid-16 century.

Where Grown

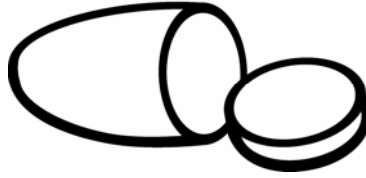
The leading producers of cucumbers in the United States are Florida, North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Sources:

5 A Day, Fruit and Vegetable of the Month: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5ADay/month/index.htm>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cucumber>

Encyclopedia of Foods: A Guide to Healthy Nutrition. Dole Food Company: 2002.

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Types

There are several varieties of cucumber; the most popular are English, Persian, and Pickling cucumbers. All these varieties are available year round.

Persian cucumbers are also known as regular cucumbers with soft, edible seeds. The skin is often waxed to seal in moisture.

English cucumbers are sometimes known as gourmet cucumbers, "burpless," or seedless cucumbers. This variety has seeds that are very small but do not need to be removed. Longer and thinner than regular cucumbers this variety is usually shrink-wrapped to seal in moisture because they are not waxed.

Nutrients

- Cucumbers are composed mostly of water and contain only small amounts of nutrients.

Sources:

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