

LEARN



Mexican Sour
Gherkins

facts

- Spanish translation: *El pepino* • Hmong translation: *Dib ntsuab*
- Cucumbers are 96% water.
- Have you heard the phrase “cool as a cucumber”? The inside of a cucumber is 20 degrees cooler than outside temperatures during the summer.
- Mexican sour gherkins, also known as cucamelons, originate from Mexico and Central America. While they aren’t technically cucumbers, they have a fresh and tangy flavor similar to a cucumber.
- Cucumbers were originally grown in India over 3,000 years ago. They were thought to be poisonous and people would scrape the skin off to let the poison out. Despite this belief, cucumbers spread across Asia.
- Cucumbers come in different sizes and shapes. Fresh or slicing cucumbers are usually 6-9 inches long, while cucumbers used for pickles are smaller.



Kirby
Cucumber

EAT



nutrition & seasonality

• Key nutrients:

Vitamin K - Needed for blood clotting, preventing excessive bleeding.

Potassium - Helps maintain normal blood pressure.

Vitamin C - Helps wounds heal, is important for the immune system, and is an antioxidant, which protects our cells from damage.

- Fresh cucumbers are available in Wisconsin from mid-July through September.

Bitter Melon



TASTE



Nutritious,
Delicious,
Wisconsin!

taste testing

Select several varieties of cucumbers for kids to try. Different types of cucumbers include English, Slicing, or Persian. You may be able to find more unique varieties like lemon cucumbers or Mexican sour gherkins at a farmers’ market. Encourage kids to use their five senses to observe, smell, feel, listen, and taste the cucumbers. Note observations on the board and discuss similarities and differences between the varieties. Is there a favorite?

Use leftover cucumber slices to make infused water! Add cleaned and sliced cucumbers to a pitcher of water and let it rest for a few hours. Let kids enjoy the refreshing drink!

In July you can participate in the Wisconsin Cucumber Crunch to celebrate Farm to Summer!



ACTIVITY GUIDE ■ CUCUMBERS

FUN



activity: Pickling

Objective: Kids will learn an easy way to preserve fresh cucumbers.

Supplies: Cucumbers (at least 1 per student), cutting boards, knives/crinkle cutters, water, vinegar, sugar, salt, pickling spices, garlic (optional), jar or other container, saucepan, mixing spoon, burner/hot plate.

Procedure:

1. Ask each student to slice a cucumber (into rounds or spears). If needed, go through some knife safety tips first.
2. Make a quick brine by heating equal parts water & vinegar on the stove and dissolving ¼ part sugar and a tablespoon or two of salt into the liquid (you can do this ahead of time).
3. Place cucumber slices into a jar or other container (add other pickling spices and/or garlic if you want).
4. Pour in enough brine to cover cucumbers.
5. Place in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours and have a taste test the next day!
Quick pickles must be kept in the refrigerator and should be consumed within two weeks.

Discussion Questions:

- How did people keep their food from going bad before refrigerators were invented? How could people enjoy cucumbers (and other fruits/veggies) after the growing season was over (i.e. what if they wanted cucumbers in December)?
- Explain that people had to come up with creative ways to preserve foods so that they could eat fruits and veggies (and meat) when winter came. Discuss what the word “preserve” means.
- Popular food preservation techniques are canning, drying, making jam/jelly, and pickling! Identify examples of each technique.

This activity can be done in multiple settings: classroom, outdoors, garden, or virtual.

Tips for adapting to virtual learning: A simple recipe for quick pickles can be shared with families: <https://kidsgardening.org/garden-activities-refrigerator-pickles> If it is not feasible to make pickles at home, encourage kids to taste a fresh cucumber and a pickle. Engage in the discussion questions above about food preservation.

Share pictures

and engage with the Wisconsin Harvest of the Month community by using #WIHarvestoftheMonth on social media.

READ



books

- *A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds* by Jean Richards
- *The Vegetables We Eat* by Gail Gibbons
- *Cucumber Soup* by Vickie Leigh Krudwig



Activity adapted from
Vermont Harvest of the Month

GARDEN CONNECTION

planting

Plant cucumber seeds in warm soil when the danger of frost has passed. Plant seeds ½-1 inch deep and 12 inches apart. Cucumbers thrive in warm summer weather, but make sure to water them regularly. Cucumber vines grow very long and can be trained to climb a trellis or fence.

harvesting

Pick cucumbers when they reach the desired size. Cucumbers for pickling can be harvested when they are just 2 inches long. Wait until slicing cucumbers are 6-8 inches before picking them. One vine can produce 25-125 cucumbers!