



Brought to you by Viva Vegetables

A Utah State University Extension and Nutrition and Food Sciences Department campaign

The goal of the *How to Nourish With* lesson series is to provide adults and older children with helpful information and demonstrations about selecting, preparing, cooking with, and storing vegetables. This basic knowledge may encourage families to include vegetables more often as a mainstay of family meals and snacks.

Objectives:

1. Adults will explain a health benefit provided by cucumbers.
2. Adults will explain how to select cucumbers.
3. Adults will discuss cost and time effective strategies for incorporating cucumbers into family meals.
4. Adults will discuss preparation and storage techniques of cucumbers, including cleaning, trimming, cooking, and storing
5. Adults will make and taste food that includes cucumbers.

Total Time: ~1 hour

Materials

- Copies of the two case studies (see end of lesson)
- Copies of cucumber picture for each class member
- Ingredients for chosen recipe(s)

Preparation Required

- Prepare the chosen recipe(s)—you may want to prepare the entire recipe, or just prepare the cucumber so that it can be quickly incorporated into the recipe during the lesson.
- Read through the lesson plan
- Make copies of the case studies

NOTE: This lesson is best taught when cucumbers are in season (summer).

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Viva Vegetables: How to Nourish With

Cucumber

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LESSON PLAN

Introduction

Time: 5 minutes

- Thank the participants for coming to your lesson.
- Take a moment to introduce yourself and the Food \$ense program.
- Explain that you will be talking about cucumbers, and while you may cover information the participants already know, you hope to touch on information they don't know yet.
- Explain that you will talk about health benefits, selecting cucumbers, strategies for incorporating cucumber into family meals, and proper care of the cucumber. Then lesson will finish up with a delicious cucumber recipe!
- **Ask the class:** How many of you have tried a cucumber before? How many of you enjoy cucumbers?

Objective 1: Adults will explain a health benefit provided by cucumber.

Activity: Ask for four volunteers to each re-cap one health benefit provided by the cucumber.

Time: 5 minutes

- Cucumbers are a great way to decorate dishes with a touch of green and complement the dish with a pleasing taste of juicy crunchiness.
- As with all vegetables, hiding behind that beautiful flavor is a mineral that is essential for our body's functions. This mineral:
 - Supports good blood pressure
 - Allows muscles to function properly
 - Helps create water balance in the body
 - Contributes to a healthy heart and blood vessels
- **Ask the class:** What is this mineral that we're talking about? *Potassium*.
- All vegetables contain vitamins and minerals that are vital for our health. Vitamin and mineral supplements are no substitute for eating fruits and vegetables. There are other naturally-occurring substances in fruits and vegetables that enhance and facilitate the absorption and utilization of vitamins and minerals.

Objective 2: Adults will understand how to select the best cucumber.

Activity: Discussion

Time: 10 minutes

- **Ask the class:** What do you look for when you are buying a cucumber?
 - Look for cucumbers with a bright, even color of skin without dullness. The cucumber should look fresh.
 - Test the firmness of the cucumber. A good cucumber is firm and does not bend. This firmness should be right through to the tips of the cucumber.
 - Smaller cucumbers are crisper and have finer seeds, making them more appealing to many people, especially kids.
 - Avoid cucumbers with blemishes, soft spots, yellowing, or that are easily bent.
- **Ask the class:** What do you like about your cucumber when eating it?
 - It is crunchy
 - It is juicy
 - It goes well with other vegetables

- Some people have a hard time distinguishing between zucchini and cucumbers. **Ask the class:** How do you tell the difference between cucumbers and zucchini (and just reading the labels at the supermarket doesn't count)?
 - A zucchini has smooth flesh; a cucumber has bumps on its flesh.
 - Cucumbers are cold and waxy; zucchini are warm and dry.
 - Cucumbers wilt in heat; zucchinis soften, sweeten, and brown.
 - Generally, cucumbers are eaten raw, zucchini are eaten cooked.

Objective 3: Adults will understand cost and time effective strategies for incorporating cucumber into family meals

Activity: Case studies

Time: 15 minutes

- Divide group into four smaller groups.
- Give case study number 1 to two groups and case study number 2 to the remaining two groups. Case studies are at the end of this lesson.
- Have the groups read and discuss the case studies in their assigned groups. After they have finished, regroup into one large group and discuss each case study so that the whole group gets to hear both case studies.

OR

- Present the case studies to the class and have a group discussion.
- **Ask the class:** How do you prefer to eat cucumbers at home?
 - Chopped up and added to green salads
 - Mixed with onions and tomatoes with a little vinaigrette dressing to make a quick, refreshing snack.
 - Marinated in vinegar, salt, and pepper.
 - Eaten raw with dips.
 - Incorporated INTO a dip.

Objective 4: Adults will understand preparation and storage techniques of cucumber, including cleaning, trimming, cooking, and storing.

Activity: Discussion

Time: 5 minutes

Cleaning

- Begin by gently scrubbing the skin of the cucumber under running water.

Trimming

- Cucumbers don't need much trimming. Cut the ends off if desired.
- You peel off the skin or eat it with the skin on. To make it fancy, you can even "score" the skin with a fork. Drag the fork the length of the cucumber completely around the cucumber or just in certain places depending on the look you prefer and how much skin you are willing to eat. This will remove the skin where you have pressed the fork.
- Explain there are many great and fun ways to trim a cucumber for a little variety. **Ask the class:** What are some different ways you can cut up a cucumber?
 - Slice it into discs.

- Slice it length-wise (with or without the skin) to make long spears that are great for dipping.
- Cut it into cubes
- Use a small cookie cutter and cut it into different, fun, possibly holiday shapes that children would enjoy.

Cooking

- Usually, cucumbers are used in their raw form.

Storing

- Storing cucumbers is very simple. Simply wrap them tightly in plastic wrap or aluminum foil. Once the cucumber is cut, make sure to cover the cut end with plastic wrap to prevent it drying out.
- If cucumbers are already mixed into a delicious dish then just place the leftovers in some kind of air-tight container.
- Be sure to always store cucumbers in the refrigerator.

Objective 5: Adults will make and taste something that includes cucumber.

Activity: Recipe making and tasting

Time: 10-15 minutes

Cream Cheese 'n Herb Cucumber Bites

Ingredients:

1 carrot, shredded (about ½ cup), divided
 ½ cup low fat cream cheese with chive and onion
 2 cucumbers, cut lengthwise in half, seeded



Directions:

RESERVE 2 Tbsp. carrots. Mix remaining carrots with cream cheese; spoon into cucumber shells. Top with reserved cucumber shells.

CUT each cucumber half into 5 pieces to serve

OR

Easy Crisp Cucumber Salad

Ingredients:

4 large cucumbers
 8 radishes, thinly sliced
 ½ cup crumbled feta cheese (optional)
 1/3 cup zesty Italian dressing
 1/3 cup pitted kalamata olives
 ¼ cup chopped red onion

SLICE one cucumber into long thin ribbons using a vegetable peeler; set aside

PEEL remaining cucumbers; cut into 1-inch cubes. Toss with remaining ingredients.

PLACE mixture in center of serving platter. Arrange reserved cucumber ribbons around edge of platter.

Conclusion: Summary and Regroup

Time: 5 minutes

- Cucumbers offer a number of health benefits, and are easy to incorporate into your diet. When you're buying cucumbers, be sure to choose firm, bright cucumbers. Try to add variety to your diet by preparing cucumbers in different forms like juice, salad, cucumber bites, and salsas. However, you decide to prepare your cucumbers, make them enjoyable and feel great about eating something so healthy and delicious.

How to Nourish With

cucumber



A Great Health Benefit:

Cucumbers are a good source of the mineral, potassium. Among other things, potassium helps support good muscle tone and good blood pressure for a healthy heart. It is best to eat a well-balanced diet of fruits and vegetables, including cucumber, every day.

What to look for when shopping:

- Bright, evenly colored skin
- Look fresh and feel firm throughout
- No blemishes or soft, yellow spots

What to do after you buy your cucumber:

- Clean it by gently scrubbing the skin under running water.
- Peel the skin and slice it up—be creative and try different ways.
- Toss it in a green salad or put it with other veggies and herbs in a favorite dressing.
- To store a cucumber wrap it tightly in plastic wrap or place in an air-tight container.

A Great and Easy Cucumber Recipe

Cream Cheese'n Herb Cucumber Bites:

Ingredients:

1 carrot, shredded (abt. ½ cup), divided
½ cup low fat cream cheese with chive and onion
2 cucumbers, cut lengthwise in half, seeded



Reserve 2 Tbsp. carrots. Mix remaining carrots with cream cheese; spoon into cucumber shells. Top with reserved cucumber shells. CUT each cucumber half into 5 pieces to serve.

Easy Crisp Cucumber Salad

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PLACE mixture in center of serving platter. Arrange reserved cucumber ribbons around edge of platter.

Cucumber Juice

makes about 4 cups of juice
6 medium cucumbers

Set a strainer over a large bowl. For a less-pulpy juice, line the strainer with cheesecloth or coffee filters. Peel the cucumbers, slice off the ends, and chop into several large pieces. Run the cucumbers in a food processor until pulpy--about two minutes. Pour the cucumber mash into the strainer and use a spatula to gently stir the mash until no more juice is separating out. Store the juice and the pulp separately for up to one week. The juice was a bit strong and bitter all on its own. We liked it better when we mixed in some sparkling water and a squeeze of lemon.

Cucumber Case Study 1: Read through and discuss with your group

It is a hot summer day, and you and your kids could really go for something refreshing to cool you off. You think about making lemonade, but decide that it is too sugary for the kids and won't really quench your thirst. Artificially sweetened drinks can get expensive, and although water is a great choice, on a day like today you want to give them something with a little more pizzazz. You decide to use up your cucumbers and make yummy cucumber juice! What are three benefits to you and your family?

Possible Answers:

- a. The presentation is bright and beautiful
- b. The cost to make it is less than other fun summertime drinks
- c. It's healthier for you and your family than flavored drinks, sodas, or lemonades



Cucumber Juice

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Cucumber Case Study #2: Read through and discuss with your group.

It's almost dinnertime and you've had a busy day. You decide to cook some tacos and use salsa as a topping and dip with chips. But, uh-oh, you forgot to buy some salsa at the store, and not only is it too late to go buy some, you'd rather not spend the money. Looking in your refrigerator, you see some leftover cucumber that you don't want to go to waste. What can you do with it? Make some salsa! Chopped cucumber mixed with fresh or canned tomatoes, corn, and hot peppers makes an excellent salsa over tacos, enchiladas verde, and other spicy Mexican food. List at least three reasons why your homemade salsa with cucumbers was such a great idea:

Possible answers:

- a. You saved money by not using gas to go to the store and buy a pre-made salsa.
- b. You didn't let your leftover cucumber go to waste—or the money you spent on it earlier
- c. Fresh, homemade salsas with cucumber are very delicious and refreshing.