



CUCUMBER TALKING POINTS

2. A Slice of Cucumber History

- Cucumbers were first cultivated in India about 3,000 years ago.
- The cucumber arrived in Europe in the Middle Ages. By the 14th century, cucumbers had migrated to England.
- Columbus transported cucumbers to North America from Spain in the early 16th century.
- European trappers, hunters, and explorers traded cucumbers for squash, pumpkins, and gourds with native tribes of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains.
- These tribes traded with California Native Americans who used the seeds for planting and roasting.

3. How do Cucumbers grow?

- The cucumber is a warm weather, tropical plant.
- Cucumbers grow on a vine in sandy soil that is easily warmed by the sun. The warm soil is preferred by the plant and helps it to grow better.
- Outdoor cucumber plants are *monoecious* (meaning there are both stamens and pistils in separate flowers on the same plant) and produce 10-20 male flowers for every one female flower. When the female flower is pollinated, the cucumbers have seeds.
- Greenhouse cucumbers are generally *parthenocarpic*. This means the plants only have female flowers (gynoecious), which do not require pollination; therefore, the cucumbers are seedless.

4. What season do we pick Cucumbers?

- Florida is the leading producer of cucumbers in the United States, the cucumbers are best from March through May, and then again in November and December.

- California grows cucumbers are available year-round, but have the most flavor during spring and summer.
- Buy locally grown fruits and vegetables in season – they may be fresher and cost less than varieties shipped from other states or countries. In South Dakota cucumbers can be grown in the summer time.
- Ask the kids who plants a garden?
 - Try these other champion sources of water: cabbage, celery, melons, radishes



4. Why should we eat Cucumbers?

- A ½ cup of sliced cucumbers provides:
 - A good source of vitamin K.
 - A source of water, a vital nutrient for the body.

What is Water?

1. Water is an essential nutrient for all life forms.
2. Approximately 60-65% of the human body is made up of water, or about 11-12 gallons for a 150-pound person.
3. Every cell, tissue, and organ and nearly every bodily function needs water to operate.
4. Water carries nutrients, helps maintain normal body temperature, lubricates joints, and helps get rid of waste products.
5. The recommended daily amount of fluid is 64 ounces (or eight cups).

6. Water can come from foods, like fruits and vegetables, as well as plain water and other beverages.

Champion Sources of Water:

(Percent Water by Weight)

Cabbage (92%)
Cantaloupe (90%)
Celery (95%)
Cucumbers (96%)
Grapefruit (90%)
Honeydew melon (90%)
Spinach (91%)
Strawberries (91%)
Tomatoes (95%)
Watermelon (91%)

~Do a demonstration showing the amount of water in the above foods—maybe have the kids guess which one is the most and go on down the line. Or insert some foods that are healthy but don't contain as much water.

~If in an assembly session use some sort of water bottle and ask the students to pretend that it is a cucumber and show that 96% of that water bottle would be water if it were a cucumber. It will provide a visual about the amount of water that is vegetables. Also, you can tell them about other fruits and veggies that have lots of water in them, from the list above. Or play a guessing game.

6. How do you pick a good Cucumber?

- Look for different varieties of cucumbers like Apple, Lemon, Japanese, Persian, or English.
- Choose firm cucumbers with smooth skins. Avoid cucumbers that have shriveled ends or blemishes.

- Store cucumbers in a cool, dry place for up to one week. Or, keep in the refrigerator for up to five days in a plastic bag.
- **Helpful Hint:** Thicker cucumbers have more seeds.
- What about pickles? Pickles are made from specific types of cucumbers. These cucumbers have a thinner skin and usually are shorter in length than slicing cucumbers. Pickles do not have the same nutritional value as cucumbers because the pickling process takes away some nutrients.

Healthy Serving Ideas

Eat a cool, crisp cucumber for a thirst-quenching snack.

Add sliced cucumbers to salads or sandwiches for extra crunch.

Make a cucumber and tomato pita sandwich.

Mix sliced cucumbers with vinegar, water, salt, and pepper for a side dish.

Serve sliced cucumbers with low-fat yogurt dip for a healthy snack.

How Much do I Need?

A ½ cup of sliced cucumber is about • one cupped handful.

A ½ cup of cucumbers is a good • source of vitamin K, which helps your blood clot.

Cucumbers are about 96% water.

Just the Facts

There are over 800 species in the Cucurbitaceae family and they include cucumbers, gourds, melons, pumpkins, and squashes.

The inside of a cucumber can be up to 20 degrees cooler than the exterior.

Per capita, Americans eat about eight pounds of pickles per year.