

On the table...

~Cool as a cucumber cakes~

By Laura Kurella

I don't think I can recall a single day in my life that I didn't love cucumbers. In fact, all it took was slicing into one to get me running to the kitchen!

I do recall being afraid of their seeds, though, due to a tale a sister once told me, stating that if I were to ever swallow a seed, it would grow into a plant inside of me and vines would start to sprout out my nose!

Harboring such scary thoughts made it difficult for the younger version of me to enjoy cucumbers without carefully spitting out each and every seed.

Thank God, I grew older and wiser, and discovered that the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, prized cucumber for many uses, and not just for food.

Louis XIV cherished cucumbers so much that the invention of greenhouse cultivation came to be out of his desire to have cucumbers available to him year-round!

Possessing a long list of benefits, cucumbers are an excellent

anti-inflammatory, and provide flavonol, which helps improve brain health and speed up brain performance.

Rich in vitamins, especially vitamin B complex which includes vitamin B1, vitamin B5 and vitamin B7. Vitamin B7 is also known as biotin which is very effective in relaxing the nervous system, reduce the effects of stress and anxiety, and help with hair growth.

Containing high levels of potassium, cucumbers help with muscle contraction and heart function, and their fiber can help reduce cholesterol and help prevent heart blockage.

Rich in silica, which helps develop strong, healthy con-

nective tissues and healthier, brighter skin, cucumbers also possess antioxidants with strong cancer-fighting abilities that can help prevent free radicals from attacking the body and become a disease.

Cucumbers can also help prevent constipation and kidney stones, remove accumulated toxins and waste materials from the blood and gut, and help to effectively reduce and control blood sugar levels. Cucumbers are also an alkaline food, meaning they can help counteract acidic issues in the body, help normalize body temperature during summer, and counter the effects of uric acid, which helps prevent inflammation from conditions like arthritis, asthma, and gout.

Used topically, cucumbers can help treat sunburn, swelling under the eyes, and help treat psoriasis, eczema, and acne.

Offering so many benefits, and fresh, delicious flavor, here now are some pleasing ways to go full on, "cool hand cuke." Enjoy!
Sources: nbd.nal.usda.gov; ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Sweet 'n' Sour Cuke Slaw

Prep Time: 20 minutes; Yield: 4 servings.

1/4 cup cider vinegar
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
4 cups thinly sliced English cucumber

In a large bowl whisk together vinegar, oil, sugar, salt, and black pepper. Add cucumber; toss gently to coat. Serve immediately or cover and chill for up to 2 hours.

Cool Cuke Water

Prep Time: 5 minutes; Inactive Time: 4 hours; Total Time:



Cool, hydrating, and refreshing, cucumbers offer a crisp, crunchy, and healthfully-delicious way to cool down on a hot summer day! **Photos by Laura Kurella**

4 hr 5 min; Yield: 2 quarts
1 English cucumber
2 quarts water*
*= can sub sparkling (see instructions)

Place 1 thinly sliced English cucumber in a pitcher. For still infused water, add 2 quarts of water. For sparkling water, add 1 quart of seltzer during prep and a second quart just before serving. Refrigerate 2 to 4 hours to allow the cucumber to infuse. Stir well and strain, discarding the cucumber. For serving, add fresh cucumber slices for garnish and plenty of ice. The infused water will keep refrigerated for up to 2 days.

Sockeye Sensations

Prep Time: 15 minutes; Total Time: 15 minutes; Yield: 16 servings.

1 large cucumber
8 ounces Neufcha-

tel cheese, softened

1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/8 cup minced fresh chives
4 ounces of smoked salmon, grilled or poached

Garnish: Fresh dill

Peel cucumber then run a fork down its length to score it all the way around.

Slice into pieces about 1/2 inch thick. Use a melon baller or teaspoon measure to scoop out part of the insides. In a bowl combine cheese with onion powder and fresh chives. Using a tablespoon scoop, fill the divots in the cucumber with the cheese mixture. Top with a chunk of salmon and fresh dill. Chill until serving.

