



**English Name:** Cucumber

**Scientific Name:** *Cucumis sativus*

**Irish Name:** Cúcamar

The cucumber is approximately 95% water. We refer to it as a vegetable but it is in fact a fruit, just like the tomato. The cucumber belongs to the same family as squashes, gourds and melon. Cucumbers are the fruits that are produced on a yellow flowering plant. The plant itself, which begins as a large seed, grows on a creeping vine that produces tendrils to attach itself as it grows. It has large leaves that provide cover for the fruit, which are long and cylindrical in shape and tapered at the ends. The cucumber is green and the one we are familiar with in the supermarket is about 35 cm long.

Generally cucumbers are grown in greenhouses and these varieties usually self-pollinate. In more southerly areas, where the weather is warmer, they can be grown outside. The outdoor varieties need pollinating, which is helped along by bees.

They need fertile ground in which to grow, plenty of water and feed regularly. Seeds are planted from mid-February to mid-March and are harvested from July to October.

Cucumbers appear to have been cultivated since ancient times, with many references to them in old books.

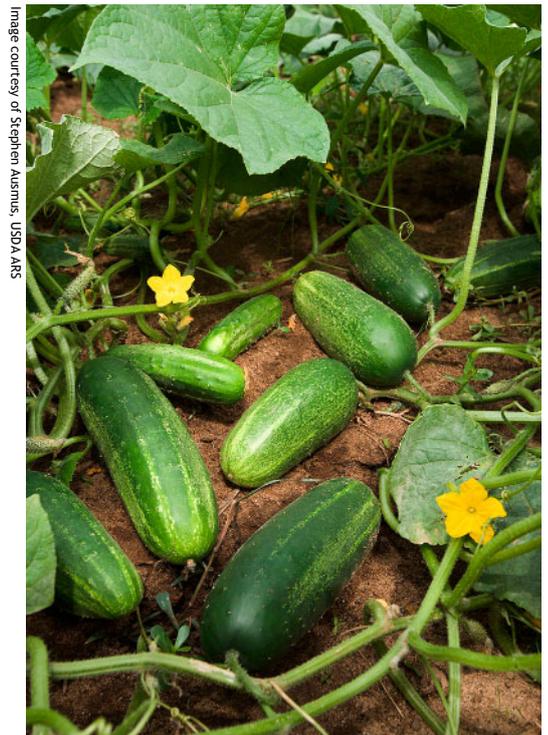


Image courtesy of Stephen Ausmus, USDA ARS

Cucumbers growing on the vine.

## A Refreshing Food

Cucumbers are mainly eaten in salads and other refreshing dishes, mixed with yoghurt to accompany curries, they are also cut up and pickled in vinegar. Really small cucumbers are called gherkins and these are called cornichons and you'll find them in jar in the supermarket.



### Recipe for RAITIA FRESH CHUTNEY

#### Ingredients

- 250ml/8fl oz natural yoghurt
- ½ cucumber, grated or finely chopped
- a handful of chopped mint leaves
- a pinch of salt

1. Squeeze the cucumber in a clean tea towel to remove excess water.
2. Mix all ingredients together and serve as a dip with poppadums or curry.



Cucumber are a refreshing snack and are a source of Vitamin K.

## Beautiful Cucumbers

Cucumbers are said to have anti-inflammatory properties and slices placed on the eyes are believed to reduce puffiness.

