

CUCUMBERS: A HEALTHY CHOICE!

Grades 2-3 | 1 Class Period



OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will identify the essential health benefits of cucumbers. They will create a classroom display or construct a book to share their knowledge with others and learn how to make pickles.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why are cucumbers essential to good health?
- What are some words you can think of to describe a cucumber?
- In what way are cucumbers and pickles similar and different?

MA STATE FRAMEWORKS

Nutrition and Balanced Eating [3.1.NE]

1. Identify principles of balanced eating (i.e., moderation, eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, consuming nutrient-rich foods, limiting processed foods and foods high in added sugar, drinking water, limiting sugary beverages) when making nutrition-related decisions.
2. Discuss the benefits of balanced eating on physical health (i.e., supporting growth and development, ability to engage in physical activity) and emotional and mental health (i.e., ability to manage stress, positive emotions) when making nutrition-related decisions.
3. Demonstrate how to use food labels as part of nutrition-related decision-making.

MATERIALS

- Cucumbers to pass around
- Handout: *Health Benefits of Cucumbers* article
- Handout: How to Make Pickles recipe

PROCEDURE

Warm Up

Have students sit in a circle and pass a cucumber around the circle. When the cucumber gets to them, ask students to think of a word they would use to describe it. Ask students:

Have you ever tasted a cucumber? How was it prepared?

How would you describe the taste?

Explain that in this lesson, students will learn that cucumbers have many great health benefits.

Activity

Give each students a copy of the handout and read it together or assign it as a partner reading. As they read, ask students to write down 5 ways that cucumbers support health. Have them circle the one they think is most important.

Divide the students into pairs. Have each group choose one of the health benefits and create a poster for a classroom display on the health benefits of cucumbers. For an alternative, have the students design one page of a classroom book that can be shared with younger students.

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EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

Have a taste test that compares cucumbers to different types of pickles. Ask students: what makes them taste so different?

Ingredients & Tools

- Vegetables: you can use cucumber, carrot, green beans, onions, etc.
- 3 cups apple cider vinegar (or distilled white vinegar)
- 3 cups water
- 2 Tablespoons kosher salt
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 2 Tablespoons (or more) pickling spices (or make your with allspice, dill seed, mustard seed, peppercorn, crushed chili pepper, bay leaf, clove, and coriander seed.
- 3 to 4 clean, pint-sized canning jars with tight-fitting lids
- Non-reactive saucepan (stainless steel or glass; avoid aluminum)
- Hot plate or induction burner

Method

- Cut up the vegetables you will be pickling.
- Make the brine: Add water, vinegar, salt, and sugar to a large saucepan and bring to a boil.
- Simmer for a few minutes, until the salt & sugar has dissolved.
- Add pickling spices and simmer for 3-5 more minutes, then turn off heat.
- Carefully pour hot liquid over the vegetables you've chosen until they're completely covered by liquid.
- Allow jars to come to room temperature, then cover, and refrigerate.
- Let the jars sit in the refrigerator for a few days before consuming. Keep leftovers in fridge.
- Discard pickles after 2 weeks (if you haven't eaten them all by then!)



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HANDOUT

Cool as a Cucumber: Why this crunchy vegetable is good for you!

Did you know cucumbers are more than just a crunchy snack? They're also packed with healthy goodness that helps your body feel its best! Whether you eat them in a salad, on a sandwich, or all by themselves, cucumbers are a super smart choice.

What's in a Cucumber?

Cucumbers are made mostly of water—about 95%! That means they help keep you hydrated, especially on hot days or after playing outside. Staying hydrated helps your body stay cool and your brain stay sharp.

Cucumbers also have vitamins and minerals like:

- Vitamin K – helps your blood clot when you get a cut.
- Vitamin C – boosts your immune system so you don't get sick as often.
- Potassium – keeps your muscles working strong.

Good for Your Stomach & Digestion

Cucumbers have fiber. Fiber helps you feel full and keeps your digestion working smoothly. That means less tummy trouble and more energy to play!

Skin Superstars

Have you ever seen someone put cucumber slices on their eyes? That's because cucumbers are great for your skin. Eating them helps your skin stay healthy and smooth, from the inside out!

Fun Ways to Eat Cucumbers

Cucumbers can be fun to eat in lots of ways:

- Sliced into round "cucumber coins"
- Cut into sticks and dipped in hummus or ranch
- Added to a fruit salad for a cool, fresh twist

So next time you see a cucumber, give it a try! It's crunchy, cool, and full of power-packed health benefits. Your body will thank you!