

Cucumber

Cucumbers, are a member of the gourd family, and have been cultivated by man for at least 3,000 years. They appear to have originated in the foothills of the Himalayas, in or near present day India. The cucumber is also listed among the foods of ancient Ur and the legend of Gilgamesh describes people eating cucumbers. They eventually found their way to Egypt and were subsequently cherished by the ancient Romans and Greeks. The Romans reportedly loved their cucumbers so much that they used artificial methods of growing to have it available for their tables every day of the year. They would be wheeled out in carts to sit in the sun daily, then taken in to keep them warm, stored under frames or in cucumber houses glazed with oiled cloth similar to a greenhouse. Having an enclosed seed and developing from a flower, cucumbers are technically classified as fruits.

In Western folk medicine, cucumber is considered a diuretic and a laxative, but will only be effective for hot dry dehydrated forms of constipation. In its capacity as a diuretic it is used not only for hot inflamed fluid retention, but also as a cleansing agent for rheumatoid arthritis, especially gout. To reduce heartburn or sooth an acidic stomach, a drink of fresh cucumber juice has been traditionally used. The same applies for people suffering from gastritis or ulcers if a general picture of heat and inflammation predominates. Externally the juice is good for soothing skin inflammations, burns, and irritations. It is still popularly used as an external application to sooth sore and inflamed eyes for which it is very effective. A less well known use of the cucumber is in the treatment of headaches, where a cool peeled cucumber was sliced in half and bandaged to the temples. Associated with the moon due to its watery nature, the cucumber was also used in fertility rituals, where it was kept in the bed and replaced every quarter moon.

The cucumber also has a rich history of use in China, with the first recorded medicinal use of the cucumber being in the 7th century. In Chinese medicine, the cucumber is also considered to have eat-dissipating, diuretic, laxative, and cooling / detoxifying effects. Its traditional uses include the treatment of excessive thirst, sore throat, laryngitis, acute conjunctivitis, and burns. A light cucumber soup prepared from very ripe fruit is drunk in many Chinese homes during the summer to avoid heat exhaustion and quench the thirst. The leaves, roots and stems are also used in Chinese medicine: the leaves and roots for diarrhea and dysentery; the stems for dysentery, urinary disorders and sores. Cucumber stems have also recently been used clinically in China for treating high blood pressure.

To ensure the best results however, ALWAYS buy organic!

The Barefoot Doctor