



The Scoop on this Week's Snack!

Cool and the Gang!

We may be small – they call us mini.
 We're not too wide and not too skinny.
 We like to grow under glass where the sun gets hotter,
 After we're picked, we like the fridge better,
 You would too if you were 95% water.

We're cool, we're smooth and we pack a crispy crunch,
 We're green, we'll keep you lean, we're tougher than we seem.
 Grab a bunch and take us out for lunch!



Cool Cucumber Facts...

Mini Cucumbers are a special variety, related to the Long English Cucumber, that reach maturity when they're just 4 inches long. Take a bite – don't you think they're crunchier and sweeter than their larger 'cousins'?

Since cucumbers are comprised of mainly water, their thicker skin acts like a natural wrapping (or jug) keeping the moisture in. While the flavour is in the seeds, eat the sweet and crunchy fibre-rich skin too!

Cucumbers have been cultivated for thousands of years in India and Asia making them one of the oldest vegetables in the world. Oops - similar to tomatoes and squash, although we think of cucumbers as vegetables, they are fruits. Cucumbers develop from a flower and have enclosed seeds – that's a fruit, right?

Cucumbers don't grow on trees; their plant is a creeping vine that roots in the ground and snakes its way up trellises or other supporting frames, clinging on with thin, winding tendrils.

Have you ever heard of the expression 'cool as a cucumber'? That's because with their high water content cucumbers stay cooler on the inside than on the outside – making them the ideal fresh snack on a hot day. Their coolness also makes them a natural remedy for soothing sunburnt skin.



From hot, to cool, to you - keeping it fresh with the cold chain!

Cucumber plants thrive in a warm climate. Thanks to Hot Houses, we can enjoy BC grown cucumbers in all seasons. Although the plant likes it hot, as soon as it's picked heat causes the fruit to spoil quickly. Since we want our fruits and vegetables to be as fresh and nutritious as the day they were picked, what's a grower to do?

Send it on the cold chain – that means keeping your cucumber in a cool, controlled climate every step of the way.

Picture a cucumber as part of a food chain consisting of a series of steps. Planting, growing and harvesting – that's just the beginning... **Let's take a look at the 'Cold Chain'.**

1 In the Hot House, Orchard or Field

Picked at just the right ripeness – before maturing. Right after picking the cucumbers are off to the packing house.

2 At the Packing House

Sorted, graded, packed and cooled – they're ready for transport.

Since they're living foods, all fresh fruits respire (take in oxygen and give off carbon dioxide) soon after harvesting. Cold, constant temperature and a controlled atmosphere (lowering the oxygen levels) reduce the rate of respiration and ripening. Wrapping cucumbers in plastic keeps in their natural moisture.

4 At Home

Keep up the cold chain and keep your ripe fruits and vegetables in the fridge.

Brrrr...sometimes it's just too cold. Some fruits and vegetables are transported together and kept at near freezing temperatures. Since cucumbers are made up of mostly water, they'll freeze more quickly. If it's too cold (below 6°C), they'll freeze and when they get to you will have lost their refreshing flavour and crunch.

3 On the Way to You

Keep it cool to keep it fresh and undamaged.

BC fruits and vegetables are shipped all over the province, across Canada and around the world. The cold chain continues throughout their entire journey. From a cool packing house to shipping containers, the temperature is kept at the ideal level until the produce arrives at its final destination – your local retailer.



Healthy Families BC



BC Agriculture in the Classroom