



## Cool-as-a-Cucumber Tahini Sauce

By Erin Fletter

**Prep Time** 10 / **Cook Time** / **Serves** 4 - 6

## Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

**knife skills:** Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

**chop:** to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

**grate:** to reduce food, like a carrot, to very small shreds or pieces of the same size by rubbing it on a tool with an outside surface that has holes with cutting edges (a grater).

**mix:** to thoroughly combine two or more ingredients until uniform in texture.

## Equipment

- ☐ Medium bowl
- ☐ Grater
- ☐ Cutting board
- ☐ Kid-safe knife
- ☐ Dry measuring cups
- ☐ Measuring spoons

## Ingredients

### Cool-as-a-Cucumber Tahini Sauce

- ☐ 1 cucumber
- ☐ 1 Granny Smith apple
- ☐ 1 handful fresh mint
- ☐ 1 C plain yogurt **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 1 C dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt)\*\*

☐ 2 tsp tahini **\*\***(Omit for SESAME ALLERGY)

☐ 1 tsp salt

☐ 1/2 tsp ground black pepper

## Food Allergen Substitutions

### Cool-as-a-Cucumber Tahini Sauce

**Dairy:** For 1 C plain yogurt, substitute 1 C dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt.

**Sesame:** Omit tahini, made from sesame seeds.

## Instructions

### Cool-as-a-Cucumber Tahini Sauce

#### grate + squeeze

Using a cheese grater, grate 1 cucumber into a medium bowl. Pick up the grated cucumber in clean hands and squeeze out the excess liquid. Discard liquid and put the grated cucumber back into the bowl.

#### chop + tear + combine

Chop up **1 apple** (with the skin on) into small chunks. Then, tear up **1 handful of fresh mint** into small bits. Combine the cucumber, apple, and mint in a bowl.

#### measure + whisk

Measure **1 cup of yogurt** and **2 teaspoons of tahini** and add to the cucumber mixture. Whisk the cucumber dip until smooth and add **salt and black pepper** to taste. Enjoy this sauce with falafel or pita!

## Featured Ingredient: Cucumber!

Hi! I'm Cucumber!

"I'm as cool as a cucumber. Actually, I am a cucumber! I have a thick, dark green peel; I am longer than I am wide; and I am a fruit that's often used as a veggie! There are three types of cucumbers: slicing, pickling, and burpless. The slicing and burpless varieties, with or without their peels, are tasty and refreshing sliced, chopped, or minced in salads, sandwiches, salsa, sauces, appetizers, and smoothies or other drinks. The pickling cucumber eventually becomes a pickle (after its pickling spa treatment)!"

History & Etymology

Cucumbers are one of the oldest known cultivated vegetables. They have been grown for at least 3,000 years and are believed to have originated in India.

The early Greeks or Romans may have introduced cucumbers to Europe. Records indicate that the French cultivated them in the 9th century and the English in the 14th century. Then Spanish explorers brought cucumbers to the Americas in the 16th century.

Pickled cucumbers, or pickles, may have been produced first by workers building the Great Wall of China or by people in Mesopotamia's Tigris Valley.

A 1630 book called "New England's Plantation" by Francis Higginson, describing plants grown in a garden on Conant's Island in Boston Harbor, mentions "cowcumbers." The cucumber may have been dubbed cowcumber due to thinking at that time that uncooked vegetables were fit only for cows.

The word "cucumber" comes from late Middle English, from the Old French "cocombre," from the Latin "cucumis."

## Anatomy

The cucumber is a creeping vine plant that is part of the Cucurbitaceae or gourd family. Other members are melon, squash, pumpkin, and watermelon. Cucumbers grow on a vine, often in sandy soil. Sandy soil warms faster in the spring, giving cucumbers a more favorable growing environment.

Cucumber length varies. Slicers are 6 to 8 inches, burpless 8 to 10 inches, and picklers are 3 to 5 inches long.

Cucumbers have a mild melon flavor. Slicing cucumbers will have seeds in their flesh, preferably small, soft seeds. Burpless cucumbers are slightly sweeter with a more tender skin and are easier to digest. They may also have no or very few seeds.

"Cool as a cucumber" isn't just a catchy phrase. A cucumber's inner temperature can be 10 to 20 degrees cooler than the outside air. This is because it consists mainly of water, which also applies to watermelons, and it takes more energy to heat the water inside the cucumber than the air around it. No wonder these are such summertime favorites! However, we don't say "as cool as a watermelon," so how did this expression become part of our vocabulary? It may have come from a poem in John Gay's Poems, New Song on New Similes from 1732.

## How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Cucumbers are ready to be harvested 50 to 70 days after planting. They are ripe when they are firm and bright or dark green. Slicing cucumbers will be six to eight inches long. Avoid leaving them on the vine too long, or their taste may become bitter and their rind tougher.

At the store, look for firm cucumbers without blemishes, wrinkles, or soft spots. Organic cucumbers are the best choice to avoid pesticide residue, if available. In addition, washing them reduces the amount of residue and pathogens.

If you don't eat your fresh, uncut cucumbers immediately, store them in your refrigerator crisper drawer in

a plastic bag for up to three days if unwaxed and up to a week if waxed.

You can eat slicing and burpless cucumbers by themselves, slice or chop them into salads, or blend them into sauces and smoothies.

Pickling cucumbers are pickled whole or sliced in brine, sugar, vinegar, and spices. There are several kinds of pickles, such as sweet, bread-and-butter, gherkin, and kosher dill.

## Nutrition

Cucumbers are 96 percent water, have very little fat, and are low in calories.

Cucumbers contain small amounts of the vitamins you need every day and 16 percent of the daily value of vitamin K, which helps with blood clotting.