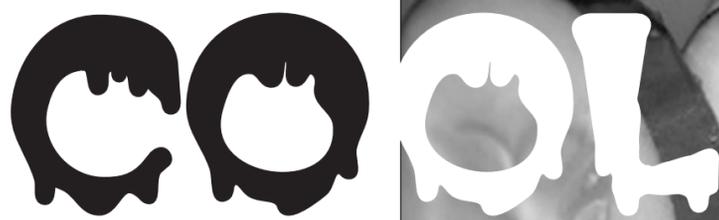


The Estherville Daily News is proud to bring you the Food page every Tuesday. If you know anyone who should be featured on this page, please send their names and why you think they should be featured to: Managing editor, 10 N. Seventh St., Estherville, 51334 or editor@esthervilledailynews.com

FOOD

No matter how you slice it, CUCUMBERS are



By MARY ANN MENENDEZ

Cucumbers are cool. They are refreshing, juicy and a good choice when the mood for munching strikes.

At 8 calories per one-half cup, the cucumber contains no fat of any kind or cholesterol, and very little sodium.

It is also a good source of Vitamin A, Pantothenic Acid, Magnesium, Phosphorus and Manganese, and a very good source of Vitamin C, Vitamin K and Potassium.

Besides containing lots of water, cucumbers provide Vitamin B1, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B3, Vitamin B5, Vitamin B6, Folic Acid, Vitamin C, Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium and Zinc. Cucumbers are used for various skin ailments, including swelling under the eyes and sunburn.

A good friend forwarded an email to me prior to the holiday season. It provided several practical uses for cucumbers. Here are some of the tips:

■ If you are tired in the afternoon, put down the caffeinated soda and pick up a cucumber. Cucumbers are a good source of B Vitamins and Carbohydrates that can provide that quick pick-me-up that can last for hours.

■ Supposedly cucumbers can provide an easy way to remove cellulite. Rub a slice or two of cucumbers along your problem area for a few minutes. Evidently the phytochemicals cause the collagen in your skin to tighten, firming up the outer layer and reducing the visibility of cellulite. This philosophy means cucumbers should work great on wrinkles.

■ Do you want to avoid a hangover or terrible headache the morning after? Remember to eat a few cucumber slices before going to bed. Chances are you will wake up refreshed and headache free. Cucumbers contain enough sugar, B vitamins and electrolytes to replenish essential nutrients the body lost, keeping everything in equilibrium.

■ Are you fighting off that afternoon or evening snacking binge? Cukes have been used for centuries and often were used by European trappers, traders and explorers for quick meals to thwart off starvation.

■ Time is running out and there is no time to polish your shoes? Rub a freshly cut cucumber over the shoes. Its chemicals will provide a quick and durable shine that not only looks great but also repels water.

■ The next time a squeaky hinge is annoying, rub a cucumber slice along the hinge and the squeak should be silenced.

■ If you find yourself stressed out and



don't have time for massage, facial or visit to the spa, cut up an entire cucumber and place it in a boiling pot of water, the chemicals and nutrients from the cucumber will react with the boiling water and are released in the steam, creating a soothing, relaxing aroma.

■ Out of gum or mints? Place a cucumber slice in your mouth and press it to the roof of your mouth for 30 seconds. This will eliminate bad breath, as the phytochemicals will kill the bacteria causing the odor.

■ If you are tired of your bathroom mirror fogging when showering, rub a cucumber slice along the mirror. It will eliminate the fog and provide a soothing, spa-like fragrance.

In researching recipes for today, I found out how versatile cucumbers really are. Besides adding crunch to salads, they go into dips, fancy appetizers and hot dishes. If all else fails, simply slice up a cucumber. Add a little green onion and celery, both sliced thin. Throw in a few olives. Sprinkle some of your favorite seasonings on with a little olive oil and white wine vinegar. Add some of your favorite crackers or choice of bread, and you have a light lunch that is simple to prepare and easy to enjoy!

Fancy Cucumbers

3 large cucumbers
1 small onion, chopped
2 cups canned diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon salt
Dash of freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons minced green pepper
 Pare the cucumbers only if they have been waxed. Cut lengthwise into quarters, then crosswise into 1-inch chunks. Combine cucumbers and remaining ingredients in a saucepan and simmer, covered, until cucumbers are just tender, about 10 to 12 minutes. Makes 8 servings.

Cucumber-Olive Dip

1 (8 ounces) pkg. cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons milk
4 teaspoons prepared mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
1/4 cup minced parsley
1 (3.5 ounces) can ripe olives, drained and minced

3 large cucumbers

About 30 minutes before serving, beat first 7 ingredients until smooth in a small bowl with mixer at low speed. Occasionally scraping bowl with rubber spatula. Stir in olives and parsley. Using a fork, gently score cucumbers before cutting thin slices. Serve cucumber with dip.

Cucumber-Crab Combo

4 cucumbers, sliced thin, unpeeled
1 tablespoon salt
1 (6 ounces) can crab
Dressing:
1/4 cup light soy sauce
1/8 cup rice wine vinegar
1/2 tablespoon sesame oil
Pinch of sugar

Mix the cucumbers with salt. Place in a colander and the salt and water from the cucumbers will drain off. Drain for about 45 minutes. Mix cucumbers with the crabmeat. Make a dressing of the light soy sauce, rice wine vinegar, sesame oil and sugar. Toss with the crab/cucumber mixture and serve. Serves 6.

Cucumber-Yogurt Dip

1 cucumber
1 (8 ounces) container plain low fat yogurt
Garlic powder, to taste
Dash of Worcestershire sauce
 Scrub cucumber to remove wax. Grate the unpeeled cucumber and drain until almost dry. Combine other ingredients. Chill for several hours. Serve with crackers or fresh vegetables.

Cukes Au Gratin

3 cucumbers, peeled and diced
3 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons flour
1 1/4 cups milk
1 chicken bouillon cube
1/4 teaspoon grated onion
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup mild cheese, grated
1/3 cup bread crumbs

Cook cucumbers about 5 minutes in barely enough salted boiling water to cover; drain well. Make a cream sauce of butter, flour and milk stirring constantly until smooth. Stir in bouillon cube and onion and season sauce to taste. After bouillon cube is completely dissolved, add cheese and simmer until melted, stirring constantly. Add cucumbers and pour in small greased casserole. Top with breadcrumbs and bake in moderate oven 350 degrees about 20 minutes or until brown.

Refreshing Ring

1 (3 ounce) pkg. lemon gelatin
Three-fourths cup boiling water
2 (3 ounce) pkgs. cream cheese
1 cup salad dressing
1 teaspoon prepared horseradish
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons lemon juice
3/4 cup shredded unpared cucumber
1/4 cup finely sliced green onion
 Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Stir in the next 4 ingredients. Beat smooth with electric or rotary beater. Add lemon juice. Chill until thick but not set. Stir in cucumber and onion. Pour into mold. Chill until firm.

Delicious Cucumber Bites

8 ounces cream cheese
2 tablespoons Miracle Whip
1 pkg. Good Season's Italian dry dressing mix
Cucumbers, peeled and sliced
Cocktail rye bread
Dill weed
 Mix cream cheese, Miracle Whip and Good Season's Italian dry dressing together. Spread mixture on rye bread. Place one slice cucumber on each and sprinkle with dill weed. Serve immediately.

Aim for healthy bulk in diet for losing weight

JIM ROMANOFF
FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Eating less isn't the only way to weigh less.

While starving yourself can help you shed weight, it isn't healthy and will only leave you with stronger cravings that you're more likely to cave in on than if you had eaten a moderate, balanced and healthy diet.

The key to losing weight and staying satisfied is to eat foods that are low in calories but high in bulk and fiber, such as vegetables, whole grains (such as pasta and rice) and low-fat soups.

Add a reasonable amount of healthier fats, such as olive and nut oils, a bit of fish or other lean protein, and a modest amount of cheese and you have the backbone of the Mediterranean diet. It's not just immensely satisfying, it's also incredibly healthy.

The recipe for simmered Mediterranean vegetables and tuna is an excellent example of these tasty principals. Eggplant, tomatoes and zucchini are sauteed in olive oil, then simmered until tender. Chunk light tuna, chopped olives, capers and a small amount of feta cheese are stirred in at the end, then the whole stew is served over whole-grain pasta.

The dish by itself is a complete meal, but adding a salad never hurts.

Simmered Mediterranean Vegetables and Tuna

Start to finish: 35 minutes (20 minutes active)

Servings: 4
28-ounce (800-gram) can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 small eggplant (3/4 pound (340

grams)), peeled and cut into sticks 1/2-inch (1.3-centimeter) thick and 2-inches (5 centimeters) long
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 small zucchini, cut into sticks 1/2-inch (1.3-centimeter) thick and 2-inches (5-centimeters) long
8 ounces (225 grams) whole-grain bow tie or other small pasta
6-ounce (170-gram) can water-packed chunk light tuna, drained and flaked

1/4 cup (60 milliliters) pitted Kalamata olives, chopped
1/4 cup (60 milliliters) chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 tablespoon capers, rinsed
4 ounces (113 grams) feta cheese, crumbled

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Meanwhile, drain the tomatoes, reserving 1 cup (230 ml) of juice. Set aside.

In a large nonstick skillet over high heat the oil. Add the garlic and eggplant and saute until the garlic is golden, about 1 minute. Reduce heat to medium and stir in the salt and pepper. Cover the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until the eggplant is tender, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the zucchini, tomatoes and juice. Bring the mixture to a simmer, cover the pan and cook until the zucchini is tender, about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta in the boiling water according to package instructions. Drain well and transfer to a large serving bowl.

Stir the tuna, olives, parsley and capers into the vegetable mixture. Cook, stirring until heated through. Gently stir in the feta cheese. Spoon the mixture over the pasta.

Nutrition information per serving (values are rounded to the nearest whole number): 459 calories; 119 calories from fat; 13 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 51 mg cholesterol; 61 g carbohydrate; 27 g protein; 10 g fiber; 1,225 mg sodium.

In frugal kitchens, think lentils as well as beans

JIM ROMANOFF,
FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Most people know beans are a frugal cook's best friend. They are inexpensive, nutritious and filling. But many people may not realize — perhaps because so few Americans eat them regularly — that lentils share those qualities.

This recipe for curried lentils with chicken, which costs under \$1 per serving, is a simplified version of an Indian dal. It can be made with leftover cooked chicken, turkey or even tofu, and can be on the table in less than 45 minutes.

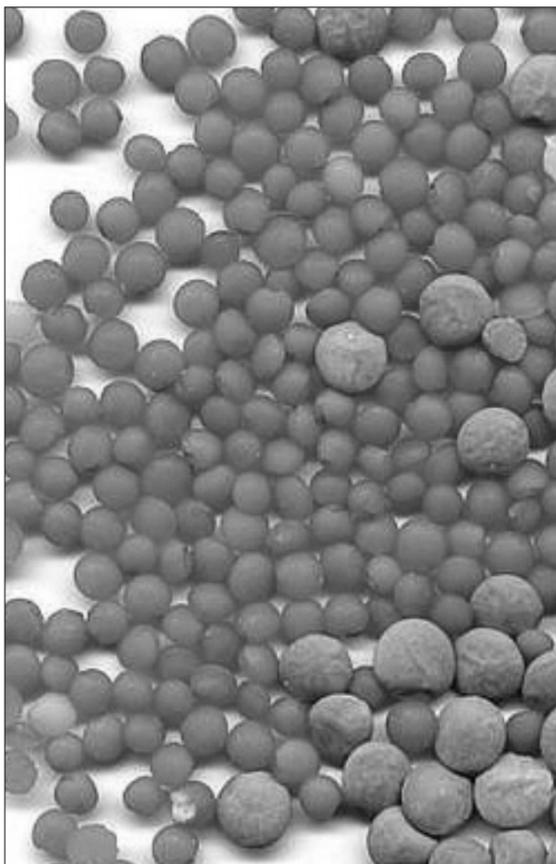
The dominant seasoning, curry powder, is a blend of many spices, and adds complex flavor without the cook needing to reach for multiple ingredients. A can of diced tomatoes with jalapenos also does double duty by adding both acidity and heat.

To complete the meal, serve this spicy curry over a bed of steaming basmati rice.

Curried Lentils with Chicken

Start to finish: 45 minutes (15 minutes active)

Servings: 4
1 cup brown lentils
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
2 teaspoons curry powder
14-ounce can diced tomatoes with jalapenos
4 cups cooked diced chicken or turkey



1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup low-fat plain yogurt
 In a medium saucepan over high, combine the lentils and enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to simmer and cook until the lentils are just tender, about 30 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside. In a large saucepan over medium-high, heat the oil.

Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until softened, 2 to 4 minutes. Add the curry powder to onions and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Add the reserved lentils, tomatoes, chicken (or turkey) and salt. Cook, stirring often, until heated through. Remove from heat and stir in the yogurt.