QUICK CUCUMBER PICKLES

INGREDIENTS
4 medium cucumbers
¼ cup vinegar
2 tsp sugar
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp ground black pepper
¼ tsp red pepper flakes
½ small red or white onion, sliced thin

Makes 6 Servings

DIRECTIONS
1. Wash the cucumbers but do not peel. Slice the cucumbers ¼-inch thick.
2. In a bowl, stir together the vinegar, sugar, salt, black pepper and red pepper flakes. Stir until the sugar is dissolved.
3. Add the cucumber and sliced onion to the bowl. Toss well, then cover and refrigerate.
4. Let marinate for a couple of hours before serving, turning occasionally.

Variations:
Traditional: reduce the sugar to ¼ tsp, add ¼ cup chopped fresh dill and 1 tsp finely chopped fresh garlic.
Asian: Make an Asian-inspired pickle: add ½ bell pepper cut in thin slivers, 1 medium carrot sliced thin, and 2 tsp finely chopped fresh ginger

INFORMATION ON CUCUMBERS
- Cucumbers are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fiber, are low in calories and fat-free.
- Cucumbers are related to squash and melons.
- Most supermarket varieties are coated with a thin layer of edible wax to help keep in the moisture. Varieties from the garden and farm market, as well as cucumbers grown for pickling, are not waxed.
- Cucumbers contain a lot of water, and dry out quickly. Store for a few days, wrapped, in the refrigerator.
- Large cucumbers may have larger, tougher seeds—if desired, slice in half lengthwise and scrape the seeds out with a spoon before continuing with any recipe.

OTHER USES FOR CUCUMBERS
- Sliced, diced or shredded cucumbers can be added to many salads and cold dishes.
- Try making pickles at home—it is fun and low-cost, and no special equipment is needed.
How to Store Cucumbers So They Stay Extra Crunchy

1. CLEAN THOSE CUKEs

When you bring your cucumbers home, remove them from whatever packaging they came in and give them a rinse. You want to wash off any dirt or grime, and yes, even the vacuum-sealed seedless greenhouse cucumbers need to have their wrappers removed. If you see any mushy or moldy spots, cut the bad side off and eat that cucumber today.

2. KEEP THEM DRY

Make sure your cucumbers are thoroughly dry before you store them: excess water on the surface encourages spoiling. Once they're dry, wrap them in a clean dish towel or paper towel—this will help keep any condensation or humidity at bay when you store them, which helps prevent sogginess, mold, and overall deterioration.

3. TUCK THEM INSIDE A BAG

Take your dry, wrapped cucumbers and tuck them inside a plastic bag. If you use a resealable plastic bag, just keep it open at the top. A little airflow is a good thing, since it helps prevent condensation from collecting. Storing cucumbers in plastic also helps protect them from ethylene gas produced by fruits such as melons that you might have in your fridge. Cucumbers are especially sensitive to over-ripening and spoiling when exposed to this gas.

4. KEEP THEM COLD, BUT NOT TOO COLD

Put that bag into your fridge. The crisper drawer is an excellent place if you've got room in there. Your cucumbers should be safe and sound for about a week. If you use half of cucumber, just cover the exposed end with a little bit of plastic wrap and pop it back into its swaddling in the bag.

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