

## THE HUMBLE CUKE

There is so much to love about a cucumber. The seeds germinate quickly, they grow vigorously and their tendrils are practically balletic as they climb the trellis. And once they start producing there are endless ways to enjoy this mild, crisp, adaptable veg. Even sliced garden cucumbers simply sprinkled with Maldon salt are a revelation. When you have an opportunity to purchase fresh cucumbers from a farmer's market and not the grocery store, do it. You can taste the difference the same way you can taste a fine homegrown tomato's superiority over the bland hothouse variety. All of this and they won't make you fat!

**COOKING**  
À LA *Lala*



## CHILLED CUCUMBER SOUP À LA LALA

1 1/2 lbs. Cucumbers peeled, seeded  
and chopped  
2-3 T. chopped Vidalia onion or shallot  
1/2 c. buttermilk  
1/2 c. sour cream or yogurt

1 T. white or rice wine vinegar  
1T. EVOO  
2-3 T. chopped, fresh dill  
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine first 7 ingredients in a blender and blend on high speed for a minute or two. Season with salt and pepper to your liking.

Serve chilled, garnished with a feather of dill and a drizzle of EVOO.

Enjoy this lovely, mild summer soup!

# GARDEN CUCUMBER SALAD À LA LALA

## DRESSING:

2 T. sour cream  
3/4 c. cider vinegar  
1 T. chopped shallot  
Salt and pepper

## SALAD:

2-3 cucumbers, roughly peeled, seeded and sliced thin  
1/4 c. chopped onion (Vidalia, red or white—whatever you like)  
2-3 radishes, sliced thin  
1 stalk celery, sliced thin  
3 T. chopped, fresh dill

Whisk first 3 ingredients together in a small bowl or blend them in a blender or a mini food processor. Add salt and pepper to your liking and set aside.

Put all the sliced vegetables into a bowl and dress lightly.

Serve chilled and enjoy the flavors of Spring!



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# REFIGERATOR PICKLES À LA LALA

## BRINE:

1 1/4 c. distilled white vinegar  
3 T. salt  
2 T. sugar  
2 c. cold water

## PICKLES:

7-8 pickling cucumbers, unpeeled and quartered lengthwise.  
2 T. coriander seeds  
1 t. mustard seeds  
1 t. Red pepper flakes  
6-8 cloves of garlic, peeled and halved  
16-20 sprigs of dill  
2 grape leaves (optional, but they will make

This recipe will make about 2 qts. of pickles. You will want to have a couple of wide mouth quart jars.

Combine the vinegar, salt and sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat until the solids dissolve. Add the cold water and chill until ready to use.

Start by putting a grape leaf, if using, in the bottom of each jar. Now, begin packing the cucumber spears into the jar and as you go, layer in the dried spices, the garlic halves and the dill so that they are nicely distributed among the cukes. Pack them in as tight as you can. If there is room at the top, slice some of your spears into smaller chunks to get the jar as tightly jammed as you can. Now pour the chilled brine over the pickles and refrigerate for at least 24 hours and up to several weeks.



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## AGUA FRESCA À LA LALA

**1/3 c. simple syrup**  
**4-5 cucumbers, peeled and chopped**  
**1-2 serrano peppers, chopped** (*remove seeds to tame the heat*)

**3-4 T. chopped ginger**  
**4 oz. lime juice**  
**Fresh mint to garnish**

Start by making a simple syrup: in a small saucepan, dissolve 1 c. of sugar into 1 c. of water over medium heat. When the sugar has dissolved, put in a jar and chill until ready to use. Alternately, you could add some chopped, fresh mint to the mixture as the sugar is dissolving and let it steep for about 10 minutes.

Strain it and now you have a nice mint simple syrup for your Agua Fresca or iced tea

Put the cucumbers, peppers and ginger in a blender and add 1 qt. of cold water. You may need to do this in batches depending on the size of your blender. Blend on the highest speed for as long as you can stand the noise; the longer, the better.

Drain the mixture through a cheesecloth-lined sieve and press all the liquid out of the pulp. Discard the pulp. Add the lime juice and simple syrup and taste, you may want a bit more of either or both.

Enjoy this most refreshing drink on it's own or with a bit of vodka, gin or tequila!