It is preferable to use small tender cucumbers. Pickled gherkins may be cut the same way. Use a sharp knife and halve the cucumber lengthwise. Then cut each half across to make 4 pieces. Scrape out the seeds with a teaspoon.

Place the cucumber, cut-side down, with the curved end facing you. Cut very fine strips along the cucumber, taking care not to slice right through the top end.

Sprinkle cucumbers with salt; let stand 20 minutes to soften. Gherkins don't need salting. Wash the cucumber to remove all the salt. Lay the cucumber flat and gently press with a knife so the slices will naturally fan out. Cucumber fans can be used to garnish almost any savory food.