

April 2021



“Are there *flowers* in that salad?”

## Spring Salads 101

It was important to my mother that we eat fresh healthy meals and so iceberg lettuce, waxy-skinned cucumbers, and large taste-free tomatoes waited in the pale blue salad bowl every dinner. There was always some kind of sweet dressing, most likely Catalina, similar to a milkshake in sweetness, but more orange and dairy-free. It made eating

something we thought was healthy palatable, and we ate our salads with the same gusto as the canned plums and fruit cocktail that were our weekday desserts. Not all salad came in a bowl. Aspic was popular and my mom unsuccessfully tried to convince us that jello could be savory. Non-mom family consensus was that we wasted a good salad with lime jello (green!) with diced carrot, celery, and onion. We can do better. And today's salad offerings aim to elevate, satisfy, and provide endless variety to sustain you regardless of family history and/or haunting salads of your past. Choose, vary, repeat. Find your salad joy.

Pick one or more from each category

- **Greens**

(If using packaged greens that have been triple-washed, you're good to go fresh from the container. For heads of lettuce or picked garden lettuce(s), immerse in a clean tub of water, swish, and either spin with your salad spinner (preferred) or roll in a towel, lightly press then unroll and blot/air dry. A dear friend throws her washed greens into a clean pillowcase and swings it outside above her head...) ○ Lettuces, preferably a variety of color, shapes, and textures (arugula, baby beet greens, baby kale, butterhead, cress, dandelion greens, endive, frisee, little gem, looseleaf, mâché, mesclun, mizuna, oakleaf, radicchio, romaine, spinach, sprouts, sorrel, tatsoi...)

- Herbs (remove leaves from the stems, wash and tear or chop), basil, cilantro, chives, dill, mint, parsley, tarragon, thyme...

- **Crunchy**-The contrast of textures elevates any salad.

- Cut veggies: avocado (I know it's a fruit but still), bell peppers, beets, cooked and sliced or grated raw, broccoli (I steam lightly) cabbage, carrots, cauliflower (again, steamed is better for me), cucumber, fennel, onions, radishes, sugar snap peas, fresh shelled peas, snow peas, tomato, zucchini
- Fruit (it's an addition, not a fruit salad--use sparingly) Choose citrus that feels heavy (juicy) in the hand, blemish-free fruit. Stone-fruits should be fragrant and give slightly. Berries should be firm, fragrant, and blemish-free. Organic is always best for fruit as it is heavily sprayed and thin skins are especially vulnerable.
- Nuts--pecans, walnuts, peanuts, cashews etc.
- Seeds-almond, chia, flax, hemp, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower etc.
- Fried things-onion rings (in a can!), bacon or other cooked cured meats

- **Grains or baked:**

- Croutons (dice any bread or tear pita, toss lightly with oil or butter and bake at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes, shaking the pan once until crisp but not burnt. You can freeze croutons and defrost a little before saladmaking.)

- Parm Crisp -- grate parmesan or Romano cheese on the large holes of a box grater. Place in 2-3" circles on a baking sheet and bake at 375 degrees for 5-6 minutes. Golden, cheesy goodness!
- Cooked Grains: barley, bulgur, farro, freekeh, toasted quinoa is my go-to as it adds both texture and protein, rice-preferably with color-brown, red, black etc., wheat berries (A simple internet search will tell you how to cook each grain.)
- Lightly crushed chips -- corn or potato (check out the flavored chips which add their own delight to a salad)
- **Edible flowers** (I grew, harvested, and brought nasturtiums, borage, violas, and organic roses I had grown to my sister's wedding shower in NY in 1991. I kept the flowers in damp towels with an icepack and was thrilled to see how these edible flowers elevated the salad I made. All the flowers remained uneaten and there were numerous comments about why flowers were in a salad.) Make sure yours are **organic** and bug-free. Wash gently and air dry on a towel. Hope you elevate more than annoy.

*Bachelor buttons	*Fuchsia	*Peony
*Borage	*Hibiscus	*Rose
*Calendula	*Lavender	*Snapdragon
*Camelia	*Lilac	*Sunflower
*Carnation	*Marigold	*Sweet William
*Cornflower	*Nasturtium (both leaves & flowers are peppery & add a pleasant bite	*Viola
Flowers from Arugula	*Pansy	

- **Protein** (elevates salad to a meal)
  - Cheese
  - Beans/Legumes
  - Eggs
  - Fish/Seafood
  - Meat (cooked)
  - Soy (marinated tofu, seitan)
- **Dressing/Vinaigrette**-Tastes infinitely better than what comes in a bottle, takes 5 minutes, and lasts 1-2 weeks in the fridge.

Basic vinaigrette:

- ½ cup oil (avocado or extra-virgin olive oil)
- 3 tablespoons\_vinegar (balsamic, champagne, red or white wine, apple cider, sherry etc.)
- Emulsifier (helps it all stay combined and not separate): 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard, or any nut or seed butter (I love cashew or almond butter)
- Sweetener-1 tablespoon honey or maple syrup (optional-rounds out the acidity of the vinegar)

- Garlic- 2 cloves, pressed or minced, optional-take out the green stem if there before use
- Salt- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon
- Pepper (freshly ground to taste)

Combine in a jar and shake. Taste. Add more salt if needed. Store in the refrigerator. Shake before using.

Dressing add-ins:

- 1 tablespoon of grated parmesan
- $\frac{1}{2}$  of a diced soft but not brown avocado
- Substitute 1-2 tablespoons of citrus juice (orange, lemon, tangerine etc.) for the vinegar if using that fruit or even if not.)
- A spoon of adobo chili paste from a can of adobo chiles