



## How to Build a Better Salad

*Get your family to eat greens, vegetables, and fruit by building them into interesting, aromatic, and satisfying salads full of crunch and textures, shapes, and color. Ensure that your lettuces have been spun dry as any remaining water will repel your salad dressing. Remember to dress your salad ingredients with salt and pepper because those flavors in the salad dressing will not be enough to flavor your salad.*

*An interesting salad can also be a great way to clean out leftover cooked or small amounts vegetables, cooked grains or beans, the crisper bin in your refrigerator, fruit bowl and don't forget to check your pantry for other ingredients like canned beans, jarred roasted peppers, sun-dried tomatoes, \*nuts, and seeds (sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds). Stale bread, even sandwich bread brushed with olive oil or melted butter can be turned into croutons within minutes in the oven.*

*The ingredients below are just ideas and recommended that you do not use all of them in one salad as you will dilute the flavors and textures. At the very least strive for the greens, texture, and a little sweetness. A small amount of some vegetables can be a good way for "haters" of kale, beets, or Brussel sprouts to take baby steps towards accepting these foods as part of the salad experience! And, finally do not overdress your salad for the best results and serve immediately. **See next page for a basic vinaigrette (salad dressing) recipe.** \*\**

*Consider the role that your salad plays in your meal –is it the main course served as a bed for a cooked protein? Is it a side salad next to a no-meat pasta? Are you taking it to a potluck? Or, is it a salad as a plate cleanser for a rich or fatty meat dish? These will factor into the ingredient choices you make to best complement to the rest of your meal.*

### **Ideas for Ingredients:**

**Lettuces and Greens:** Soft lettuces (red or green leaf, butter, mixed baby), crisp romaine or julienned cabbage, aromatic herbs (dill, hand-torn basil and mint leaves, leaves of cilantro or parsley, and spinach, radicchio and finely julienned kale which add a bitterness and crunch

**Crisp vegetables:** Radishes cucumber, jicama, shaved fennel, blanched broccoli florets, raw shaved broccoli stems or Brussel sprouts, shaved carrots, raw snap peas, or chopped celery

**Sweetness:** Tomatoes (in season), roasted peppers, corn kernels (canned or raw sliced off the cob), apples, orange segments, dried fruits

**Salt, tang, and funk:** Olives, some cheeses like Parmesan or feta, blue cheese, beets, jarred pepperoncini, pomegranate seeds (seasonal), and pickles (beets, red onions, zucchini)

**Chewy textures:** Sun dried tomatoes (great substitution when fresh or local tomatoes are unavailable), and dried fruits which also add sweetness (apricots, raisins, currants)

**Crunchy textures:** Croutons, toasted nuts and seeds

**Creaminess:** Soft cheeses (mozzarella, goat or blue which also adds some funk), cooked or canned beans, fresh fava beans, cooked peas (seasonal or thawed from frozen)

**Natural spiciness:** Fresh and jarred peppers, radish (daikon) sprouts, radishes, turnips

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**Method:** Season your greens and veggies with salt and pepper, and toss together. Add other ingredients, reserving some to feature as a garnish on top (i.e. olives, halved cherry tomatoes, cheeses and croutons) Toss with a small amount of salad dressing and taste. Adjust dressing, salt and pepper to taste. Top with garnishes and serve immediately.

**About Salad Dressings:** There are many bottled salad dressings available that have minimal preservatives, added sweeteners, artificial flavors, or food colors. Conversely, it's very easy to make your own salad dressings whereby you control the ingredients and flavors, it's cheaper tastier, and can last up to 2 weeks. Refrigeration required if using optional garlic, onions or shallots

**Vinegars:** Apple cider (adds natural sweetness), red wine, champagne, or rice vinegars are all great choices. Balsamic and sherry vinegars add different flavors and can change the character of your salad. Freshly squeezed lemon juice is also a great acid but may need to be bolstered with another vinegar or more mustard for the best flavors.

**Oils:** Neutral oils: Organic canola oil, sunflower oil or other vegetable oils, extra virgin olive oil, and flavored olive oils. Extra virgin olive oil can tend to overwhelm the flavor or salad dressings so it is best in combination with a neutral oil.

**The simplest dressing:** Build your salad dressing in the bottom of your salad bowl with a grating of fresh garlic or half a small shallot (or red onion) finely minced, the juice of half a lemon and 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil and add salt and pepper to taste. Whisk together. Add well dried lettuces, a handful of halved cherry tomatoes, finely sliced cucumbers, finely sliced radishes and toss together. Taste, and adjust salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately – works well with grilled meats.

### \*\* Basic Vinaigrette (Salad dressing)

#### Ingredients:

2 T Dijon or whole grain mustard (we used 1 T of each) but feel free to experiment with other types of mustard you may already own (Brown deli mustard, honey mustard, etc.)

1/3 C Vinegar (we used thyme vinegar) but red wine, champagne, apple cider, balsamic, or rice vine all are great choices

1 tsp. Kosher salt (if using iodized table salt, cut back to 1/2 tsp)

1/4 tsp. Ground black pepper

1 Three-fingered pinch of dried Herbs de Provence (or a combination of dried thyme, oregano, basil)

1/2 C. Neutral oil

1/4 C Olive oil, extra virgin is best but not required

**Optional:** 1 T, finely minced shallot or garlic oT grated onion

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## **Methods:**

In a non-reactive (glass or stainless steel) bowl, whisk together the mustard(s), vinegar, salt, pepper, and dried herbs. Add optional garlic, shallots or onion. Let it sit for 1-2 minutes so dried herbs can rehydrate in the vinegar. Combine your oils in a measuring cup with a spout and drizzle into the vinegar mix in a very slow drizzle, whisking vigorously the entire time. When half of the oil has been added, drizzle in a continuous drizzle until the oil has been absorbed and emulsified. Taste and adjust acid, oil and seasonings as needed.

**Optional Method #1:** In a small food processor, blend mustard, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Add dried herb and wait 1-2 minutes for herbs to rehydrate and start processor, adding oils in a slow stream until emulsified. Add optional shallot, garlic or grated onions and pulse for 15 seconds. Taste and adjust acid, oil and seasonings

**Optional Method #2:** Place mustard(s), vinegar, salt, pepper, dried herbs, and optional shallot, garlic or grated onion in a small glass jar with a fitted lid. Shake vigorously for a minute until the mustard(s) have combined well with the vinegar. Add oils and shake vigorously again. The vinaigrette will separate if not used immediately but can be shaken again when using next.

**Refrigerate if using optional ingredients: Shallot, garlic or onion**