



Lighten Up! Celebrate Spring with Salads and Strawberries

Each year my family and I are privileged to travel to Florida to spend Passover with my in-laws at a hotel that has an excellent culinary staff and fantastic banquet services. This year, the elegant lunch buffets boast more salad combinations than you might imagine could be made. In addition to miles-long salad "bars", at the end of which stand charming salad chefs ready to chop up all the ingredients you've chosen into "chopped salad", there are more miles of beautifully-displayed ready-mixed salads. These salads vary from Middle-Eastern varieties based on roasted red peppers or chopped eggplant to fruit-centric salads, and from classic Caprese to salads that artfully combine diced roasted beets with goat cheese, grilled fennel with oranges and perfectly coordinated dressings. That's my kind of lunch.



Mary Fabrikant

There are no rules when it comes to salads...let your imagination run free. Whether you're creating a side salad, a lunch salad or a dinner salad, salads are the perfect opportunity to play (and clean out the last bunch of grapes, last night's leftover roasted Brussels sprouts, and half a bell pepper from the fridge!). Let your imagination run and try new things. Even if your goal is to create a classic Nicoise - change it up a little! Sear and slice Ahi grade tuna, or use jarred tuna in olive oil. Instead of boiling, roast the green beans and potato wedges. Poach the egg and place it atop the greens. Smoke cherry tomatoes and include them, then carry the smoky flavor a bit further by adding a teaspoon of canned adobo sauce to the classic red wine vinaigrette. Any one of these little changes will give your classic arrangement that little je ne c'est quoi!

Orange Port Vinaigrette

Makes about 1 cup.

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I like this dressing on any salad that involves bleu cheese. And I like bleu cheese on any salad, so...I make this dressing a lot! A favorite combination is spring greens mixed with endive, pears (poached or fresh), toasted walnuts, and bleu cheese. Once you've made the dressing, have some fun with it. Try it on lots of different salad and garnish combinations to see what best suits your taste. For two servings, start with 1 tablespoon of this dressing per quart of greens, adding more as desired.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups ruby port
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream or Mocha Mix , room temperature
- 2 tablespoons orange marmalade
- 1/2 teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons walnut oil
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Simmer port and orange juice in small saucepan over medium heat until reduced to 1/2 cup, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to medium bowl; cool to room temperature.
2. Whisk vinegar, cream, marmalade, thyme, salt, and pepper into cooled port reduction. Whisk in oils until incorporated. (Can be refrigerated up to 3 weeks.)

Moroccan-Spiced Vinaigrette

Makes about 1 cup

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Mellow greens, such as leaf lettuces (red leaf, bib or butter), as well as spinach, pair nicely with this vinaigrette. Olives, shredded carrots, golden raisins, sunflower seeds, or toasted pepitas are possible garnish options. Add a grilled salmon fillet for a company-worthy dinner salad. Use about 2 tablespoons of this dressing per quart of greens; serves two.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons golden raisins
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 cup carrot juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 4 sprigs fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 tablespoon plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil



1. Place raisins in small bowl. Toast coriander and cumin in small skillet over medium heat until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer spices to bowl with raisins. Wipe out skillet; add carrot juice to skillet and simmer over medium heat until reduced to 1/4 cup, about 6 minutes. Pour carrot juice over raisins; cool to room temperature.
2. Process carrot juice/raisin mixture, vinegar, cilantro, yogurt, honey, pepper flakes, and salt in blender until thoroughly combined. With machine running, gradually add oil, scraping down jar as needed. (Can be refrigerated up to 1 week.)

Move Over Cake, Hello Pie!

The arrival of spring is marked by changes in weather, daylight, wardrobe, and menus. As the snow melts and the ground thaws, we say goodbye to heavy winter fare and hello to fresh bright flavors.

As a kid the arrival of spring came when the first strawberry pie made an appearance at the dinner table. My mom would wait until the perfect strawberries made their way to our farmers market and then the pie making would begin. Many little helping hands meant twice as many strawberries went into our mouths as into the pie...something I'm sure she had accounted for. As an adult, I still wait for that first pie and the opportunity to create my own glossy glazed fresh strawberries in a buttery pastry shell. This tried and true recipe for fresh strawberry pie will welcome spring in the sweetest way.

Perfect Strawberry Pie

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FILLING

- 4 pints fresh strawberries, rinsed, dried, and hulled
- 3/4 C. sugar
- 2 Tbs. cornstarch
- 1 1/2 tsp Sure-Jell (low sugar variety)
- Pinch of table salt
- 1 Tbs. lemon juice
- 1 baked pie shell



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Process 1 1/2 C. strawberries in food processor to smooth puree.
2. Whisk sugar, cornstarch, Sure-Jell, and salt in saucepan. Stir in berry puree. Boil over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and stir in lemon juice.
3. Toss remaining 2# of strawberries (only cut very large berries) in a bowl with berry glaze. Arrange in pie shell with cut sides facing down, filling in any holes. Refrigerate for 2 hours.
4. Top with freshly whipped cream and serve!

Mary's Tip: The Perfect Knife for Chopping Salad Fixin's

While you're whipping up the salad dressing for your salad, let's talk about the knife you're using to chop your vegetables.



I recommend a 10" Chef's knife (Wusthof and Henckels are reliable brands that will last you a lifetime) for all salad prep tasks (except maybe coring a tomato). Many women feel that the 10" knife is too large for them to handle. Nonsense. Go to a local kitchen store that carries several lines of knives (you want to have choices) and take several 10" knives out of their cases and heft them. Feel them. Balance them in your hand. Choke up on the knife. Rest your thumb on one side of the blade and the side of your forefinger on the other. Find a knife that feels good in your hand. Many Sur La Table stores will have a cutting board and some vegetables available for you to cut up, to aid in your decision.

After "saying yes" to your knife, take it home and use it. Ask someone to hide the paring knife you've been cutting carrots with so you won't backslide. Use the new knife, even if it "feels funny" to begin with. The more you practice with the knife, the more comfortable it will feel, and the faster you'll get every job done. *Still not comfortable with your new knife?* Call me. Good knife skills are crucial to your enjoyment of cooking. If you're in Denver, I'm available to help you. Okay...if you live on the island of Fiji, I'm also available to help **YOU**.

What People are Saying...

"Canteen Catering was a pleasure to do business with. Mary offered great suggestions for food, and handled everything; from food prep to table set up, to set up for our service! I had left a number of items for my daughter's bat mitzvah at the synagogue and when I arrived Saturday morning, prepared to set everything up, I was delighted to learn that the crew had done everything for me! The presentation, from the linen colors she chose from our invitation, to the lovely physical display, to the presentation of the food itself was simply amazing. Everything was clearly given personal attention and thought, and that meant a lot to me and my family. Caterers might do these types of events all the time, but I don't, and the personalized attention to detail was second to none.

I will definitely be using Canteen Catering in the future (for smaller, home-based events as the next "big" events would be weddings and we're FAR away from that!).

Thanks, CC and Mary for making a memorable occasion even more wonderful."



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