

Peach, Arugula and Goat Cheese Salad

This salad showcases ripe peaches in season. Use a local variety of white or yellow peach, or donut peaches, which are smaller than regular ones. Balsamic vinegar can be reduced to a syrupy consistency to make a delicious condiment for grilled fruit and salads.

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the ½ cup vinegar to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the vinegar is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Let cool.

Cut the peaches in half lengthwise and remove and discard the pits. Cut each half into 6 wedges. Place the wedges in a shallow dish, sprinkle with the brown sugar and drizzle with the 2 Tbs. vinegar.

Prepare a medium-hot fire in a grill. Brush and oil the grill grate or a vegetable-grilling basket. Arrange the peaches on the grate or in the grilling basket directly over medium-high heat. Grill, turning once, until grill marks appear, about 1 minute per side.

In a large serving bowl, combine the arugula and oil and toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Arrange the grilled peaches on top of the arugula. Drizzle with the reduced balsamic vinegar, sprinkle with the goat cheese, and finish with a few grindings of pepper. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *On the Grill*, by Willie Cooper (Oxmoor House, 2009).

Pepper, Tomato, Olive and Manchego Chopped Salad

Easy to make and delicious to eat, chopped salads are a crowd-friendly alternative to leafy greens. Choose firmer lettuces, such as romaine, radicchio and endive, wash and dry, and chop into strips using a chef's knife. Add a protein (such as diced cheese, turkey, hard-cooked egg or nuts), chopped vegetables and fresh herbs, then toss with your favorite vinaigrette.

To make the vinaigrette, in a large salad bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, mustard, garlic, salt and pepper.

Add the bell peppers, tomatoes, celery, olives, onion, parsley, thyme and cheese to the vinaigrette in the bowl. Toss until all the ingredients are coated with the vinaigrette. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 2 hours before serving. (The vegetables for the salad can be prepared up to 12 hours in advance and refrigerated. You can mix the vinaigrette at the same time and then combine it with the salad a couple of hours before serving.) Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Entertaining with the Seasons* (Weldon Owen, 2010).

July 17, 2011

Tips for Tastier Salads

Create contrasts: Aim for a mix of colors, textures and flavors when combining salad ingredients. If you add a soft ingredient, such as avocado or blue cheese, balance it with something crunchy, like jicama or walnuts. To offset paler greens, add brightly colored foods, such as radishes, oranges or beets. Complement sweet and rich flavors with bright, acidic ingredients, like lemon juice or grapefruit segments.

Add fresh herbs: Chop in a little fresh parsley, dill, cilantro, basil or mint to give greens a lift in flavor and an unexpected punch. Toss in colorful edible flowers like nasturtiums or chive blossoms from your farmers' market.

Taste before tossing: To taste a salad dressing, try it on a single lettuce leaf, rather than just sampling it with a spoon. You will get a better sense of how the dressing will taste in the finished salad. Adjust the seasonings if needed, adding more oil, acids, herbs, and/or salt and pepper before dressing the salad.

Don't overdress: For lettuce salads, add the dressing just before serving to keep the greens from wilting. Err on the side of underdressing: drizzle in just enough dressing to moisten the greens and then toss well to coat them. You can pass extra dressing at the table for those who want more.

Visit williams-sonoma.com to search our extensive recipe collection, find menus and tips for entertaining, and browse an expanded selection of products in every category.

Ingredients for Peach, Arugula and Goat Cheese Salad

½ cup plus 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar

2 firm, ripe peaches

2 Tbs. firmly packed light brown sugar

2 bunches arugula (about 2 cups), tough stems removed

2 Tbs. grapeseed oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

¼ lb. fresh goat cheese, crumbled

Ingredients for Pepper, Tomato, Olive and Manchego Chopped Salad

For the vinaigrette:

¼ cup olive oil

3 Tbs. sherry vinegar

1 tsp. Dijon mustard

1 garlic clove, minced

¼ tsp. kosher salt

½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

1 small yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced

1 small orange bell pepper, seeded and diced

2 cups cherry tomatoes, stemmed and halved

4 celery stalks, thinly sliced

¾ cup pitted large Spanish green olives, quartered

¼ cup finely chopped red onion

1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme

½ lb. Manchego cheese, cut into ¼-inch cubes

WILLIAMS-SONOMA

Technique Class: Deconstructing Salad

The essence of a good salad is simplicity. Clean, bright flavors that, when brought together, bring out the best in one another. Part of the art of making a truly superb salad is choosing the freshest ingredients—in particular vegetables and fruits that have become ripe in their natural season.

— Chuck Williams

Common Salad Greens

Arugula: Also called rocket, arugula has dark green, deeply notched leaves that resemble small, elongated oak leaves. Arugula is nutty, tangy and slightly peppery in flavor. Larger leaves are more pungent.

Beet Greens: Closely related to chard, beet greens have smooth, thin leaves and an earthy flavor.

Curly Endive: Also called frisée, this feathery-leaf, subtly bitter green is prized for its pale, yellow-white inner leaves, which add a bit of fluff and crunch to salads.

Dandelion Greens: Although unwelcome on most lawns, the pale green, sharply saw-toothed leaves of the dandelion have a pleasantly bitter flavor. The larger and older the leaves, the stronger and tougher they will be. Dandelion cultivated specifically for eating grows longer leaves and is more tender than its wild cousin. (Do not pick greens from lawns that have been treated with chemicals or from busy roadsides.)

Endive: Also known as Belgian endive or witloof, this member of the chicory family is widely grown in Belgium, the principal source of the endive sold in North American markets. It relies on a painstaking, nonmechanized cultivation method (the reason for its high price) that calls for forcing chicory roots to sprout in a darkened, humid room. This yields small, white (or sometimes red-tipped), tightly furled, bullet-shaped heads.

Kale: A member of the cabbage family, kale has firm, tightly crinkled leaves on long stems. Sturdy kale is dark green in color, with an earthy flavor similar to cabbage; kale can be eaten cooked or raw. Salad recipes often say to “massage” raw kale with salt and lemon for a few minutes to soften the leaves before tossing them with other ingredients.

Lettuces: All lettuces are mild in flavor when compared to other salad greens. Choose varieties that are at their peak season. Butter lettuce has soft leaves and a sweet, fresh taste. Green leaf is more crinkly and has good flavor. Pale iceberg is mild and crunchy. The delicate leaves of mâche have a nutty taste. Mild oakleaf lettuce has distinctively notched leaves, while the sturdy, dark green leaves of romaine are more robustly flavored.

Continued on next page

Salad-Making Time-Savers

Smart cooks rely on high-quality prepared foods to get dinner on the table in a snap. These ingredients help to create flavorful salads with minimal effort.

Canned beans: Kidney beans, chickpeas and other legumes can be drained, rinsed and added to salads.

Cherry tomatoes: Toss whole or halved cherry tomatoes into salads.

Croutons: Store-bought or homemade croutons contribute texture to all kinds of salads and will keep for a few weeks in an airtight container.

Crumbled cheese: Keep goat, feta or blue cheese in the refrigerator to toss into salads.

Deli meats: Sliced prosciutto, ham, salami and turkey add flavor and protein.

Dried fruits: Dried cranberries, cherries and other fruits lend a hint of sweetness.

Frozen cleaned shrimp: Keep a bag of peeled, deveined cooked shrimp in the freezer. Thaw and add to a salad to create a more substantial meal.

Hard-cooked eggs: Slices or wedges of hard-cooked egg add protein and flavor.

Mozzarella cheese: Look for bite-size fresh mozzarella balls (*bocconcini*), which can be tossed into salads without any prep.

Nuts: Buy spiced or candied walnuts, pecans, almonds, pine nuts or other nuts to sprinkle over salads for a pleasing crunch.

Olives: Keep a variety of pitted green or black olives for adding to salads (either whole or coarsely chopped).

Prewashed greens: Buy cut-up mixed lettuces, spinach, romaine, iceberg and slaw mix to streamline prep.

Rotisserie chicken: Purchase an extra rotisserie chicken, which can be stored in the refrigerator and quickly skinned, boned and chopped for tossing into salads.

Tuna in oil: Look for imported tuna packed in olive oil in jars or cans for an easy protein addition to salads.

Spinach: Spinach has dark green leaves and an earthy, faintly bitter taste. To use raw in salads, it is best to select baby spinach leaves. These small, immature leaves, often sold already washed and prepackaged, have the mildest flavor and best texture.

Watercress: Characterized by a refreshingly peppery flavor, watercress grows wild along streams and is cultivated in water. It has small, round, dark green leaves on short, delicate stems.

Salad Greens 101

Selecting: Look for fresh, crisp leaves free of blemishes, yellowed spots or tiny insect holes. Do not buy greens if they are wilted or dried out. Small, young leaves will have a milder flavor, and more and more greens are now available as tender “baby” leaves. Look for greens tied in bunches or washed, chopped and sealed in plastic bags. (Even though the latter are prewashed, they should be rinsed well again before using.) Baby greens are sold in bulk or in plastic bags. Greens are available year-round in large markets, but most are at their peak from late winter to early spring.

Storing: Store greens unwashed in plastic bags. Although best if eaten the day of purchase, soft-leaved greens will keep for up to 4 days in a plastic bag in the crisper of the refrigerator. Firmer lettuces such as romaine will keep for up to 10 days.

Preparing: Immerse greens in a large bowl or sink filled with cool water. Discard any wilted or yellowed leaves. Gently lift out the greens and repeat the washing until the water is clear. A salad spinner is ideal for drying greens, but shaking them gently in a clean kitchen towel will also absorb excess moisture. Be sure to dry the greens as much as possible, especially if using them for salad, as excess water will dilute the dressing and prevent it from coating the leaves. If you have time, put the washed greens in the refrigerator to crisp.

Vinaigrette Basics

The classic formula for a vinaigrette is 1 part vinegar to 3 parts oil, plus salt and pepper to taste. Use these proportions as a guideline to create your own dressings.

- For the easiest vinaigrette, simply drizzle olive oil and good-quality vinegar over your salad, followed by a few pinches of coarse salt and freshly ground pepper, and then toss.
- To create smooth, emulsified vinaigrettes, combine all of the ingredients except the oil in a bowl. Add the oil in a slow, steady stream as you whisk constantly with a small whisk or fork. Or, mix the ingredients in a blender or a mini food processor.
- Make extra vinaigrette and store in a jar or airtight container in the refrigerator to use later in the week.

Continued on next page

- Experiment with different kinds of vinegar, such as balsamic, cider, rice or a flavor-infused vinegar. Or, substitute fresh citrus juice, such as lemon or lime, for half of the vinegar.

- Try different types of oil: a small amount of walnut or hazelnut oil adds rich, nutty flavor to a vinaigrette.

- Make your own flavored oils by infusing olive oil with minced herbs, citrus zest, chili or other seasonings. Use the same day, or store in a stoppered glass bottle in the refrigerator for a few weeks. Check for freshness before using each time.

- For extra flavor, add minced shallots or green onions to a vinaigrette, allowing them to sit in the dressing for 30 minutes or more before adding to a salad.

- Whisk mustard, yogurt, mayonnaise or sour cream into vinaigrettes for a creamy flavor and consistency.

- Liven up the flavor of store-bought vinaigrettes by adding fresh ingredients, such as herbs, garlic, shallots or yogurt. A squeeze of lemon or lime juice can also add a hint of freshness.

- Use vinaigrettes to marinate foods before grilling or to drizzle over warm vegetables just before serving.

- If storing a vinaigrette in the refrigerator, bring it to room temperature before using.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *The Weeknight Cook* (Weldon Owen, 2009).

Green Herb Salad with Champagne Vinaigrette

In many Mediterranean countries, fresh herbs are used as primary salad ingredients. Herbs are appreciated for the complex flavor and refreshing taste they bring to a salad. Parsley, cilantro, chervil, arugula and mint are commonly used this way. Fresh oregano and thyme might be added in smaller quantities. You may use only a single herb or a mixture. Do not use woody-stemmed herbs such as rosemary or sage. Before tossing, the dressing and salad can stand for up to 30 minutes.

In the bottom of a salad bowl, combine the olive oil and shallot. Add the vinegar, salt and pepper and mix well with a fork. Top with the lettuce, parsley, cilantro and chervil. When ready to serve, toss well. Mound the salad in individual bowls or on plates. Serves 4.

Variation: To enrich the dressing, add a little Maytag, Stilton, Gorgonzola or other blue-veined cheese along with the vinegar, coarsely mashing it with a fork. Serve the salad after a main course, accompanied with a sliver of the cheese and some walnuts.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Salad*, by Georgeanne Brennan (Simon & Schuster, 2001).

Asian Sesame-Miso Dressing

In a blender or food processor, combine 1 chopped garlic clove, 2 Tbs. chopped red onion, 1 tsp. grated fresh ginger, 5 Tbs. canola oil, 3 Tbs. rice vinegar, 2 Tbs. Asian sesame oil, 1½ Tbs. white miso, 1 Tbs. honey and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Process until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Blue Cheese Dressing

In a small bowl, whisk together ¼ cup mayonnaise, ¼ cup olive oil, 2 Tbs. white wine vinegar, 2 tsp. Dijon mustard and 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce. Gently stir in ¼ cup crumbled blue cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Mustard Vinaigrette

In a small bowl, whisk together 2 minced garlic cloves, 1 minced shallot, 3 Tbs. red wine vinegar and 1 Tbs. Dijon mustard. Gradually add ½ cup olive oil, whisking constantly to form an emulsion. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Let the vinaigrette stand for at least 30 minutes to blend the flavors.

Ingredients for Green Herb Salad with Champagne Vinaigrette

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs. minced shallot

2 Tbs. Champagne vinegar

¼ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper

1 large head butter lettuce, leaves separated and torn into bite-size pieces

1 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

½ cup fresh cilantro leaves

½ cup fresh chervil sprigs