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- » Creating a salad formula that works for you and your family
- » Shopping and crafting salads for the seasons

Chapter 1

Salad Basics

There are so many different salads out there, and they look and taste different around the world. Some salads are green with vegetables, some are fruity with gelatin, and some are starchy and ready for your favorite picnic. Don't let the diet industry fool you into thinking that salads are rabbit food. They can be filling, comforting, and downright delicious. Salads can be the star of the meal or complete the meal. They can be made in advance or in a split second. They can be complex or incredibly simple. And in this book, I share all my favorite salad recipes with you! This chapter walks you through the variety of salads that exist and takes a deep dive into how to craft your own salad formula. I wrap up with seasonal considerations.

If you were to ask any of my close friends what I'm known for making (besides homemade bread), they would say salads. Salads are my go-to contribution for any school function, picnic, potluck, or meal at a friend's house. I love how a salad can complement almost any meal, from sweet and sour chicken to spaghetti with marinara. I hope this chapter helps you sort through what constitutes a salad, how to build your own, and how to grab seasonal vegetables to craft your own. Let's get started!

Types of Salads in This Book

Defining the varying salads that exist can help with meal planning. Need a grain-centered side? Head to the Chapter 14. Need a quick side dish? Head over to Chapter 8. Knowing what constitutes a salad can help you craft your own recipe from your favorite ingredients. Here's a breakdown of the key salads I tackle in this book.

Bursting with greens

Greens, greens, and more greens, please. From arugula to kale to butter lettuce to iceberg. In many parts of the world, greens are synonymous with salads. You start with a base of your favorite greens and build from there. Think of Caesar, cobb, or taco salads. Each of these classics (see Chapter 7) begins with lettuce greens as the base.

Here are greens to get you started:

- » Arugula
- » Butter lettuce
- » Cabbage
- » Collard greens
- » Endive
- » Iceberg lettuce
- » Kale
- » Mustard greens
- » Romaine lettuce
- » Red leaf lettuce
- » Swiss chard
- » Watercress

Starchy stars

Grain- or starch-based salads are generally served cold and hold up well in the refrigerator for a couple of days. These are often great additions to potlucks and picnics, like potato salads, macaroni salads, pasta salads, bean salads, or whole-grain salads. You can find a lot of these salads in Chapters 12 and 14.

Here are common starches that are the base of starchy salads:

- » Barley
- » Beans
- » Bulgur
- » Farro
- » Freekeh
- » Pasta
- » Potato
- » Rice
- » Sweet potato

Keeping it fresh and fruity

Fruit salads can have fruits as the star of the salad or included in the salad. This is a balancing act of flavors — you need to know how to match up the right fruit for the right grain or green. Certain fruits will hold up better in a salad, whether it's green, grain, or sweet. You can find fruit-focused salads in Chapters 15 and 16.

Favorite fruits for salads include the following:

- » Apples
- » Berries
- » Cherries
- » Citrus
- » Dried fruits
- » Figs
- » Grapes
- » Mangos
- » Peaches
- » Pears
- » Pineapple
- » Pomegranate
- » Watermelon

Building salad bowls

Main dish salads typically have vegetables or greens with a protein and a starch, rounded out with some sauce or dressing. Bowls are essentially salads! Think about Taco Salad (Chapter 7) or Korean Bun Noodle Salad (Chapter 9) — they're both main dish salads in a bowl. If you love simple, bowls may become your new favorite meal! Check out Chapters 10 and 11 for filling main-dish salads.

Pairing the plate with simple sides

Salads don't need to be complex or have a lot of ingredients. In Chapter 6, I highlight simple dressings for delicious vegetables that essentially make them a salad. I grew up eating Yogurt Cucumber Salad as a frequent side dish at our dinner table — you can find that recipe in Chapter 8. Side salads can be a simple green salad (like lettuce, tomato, carrot, and a dressing), or they can be fresh or blanched vegetables that have been dressed with a vinaigrette or sauce. The sky's the limit for which vegetables you dress with a vinaigrette or creamy dressing, from asparagus to kohlrabi to potatoes.

Crafting party platters

Let's get ready for a party! So often, vegetables get overlooked for party platters, at least until charcuterie boards became the next big food trend. Dressed vegetables (whether roasted, grilled, or raw) add color, texture, and bold flavors to the best party platters. You can start with crackers, cheese, and meats, but don't forget the vegetables. You can create a burger board with prepared salads as sides, a taco salad board, or a creative salad bar with all your favorite toppings, which display like a charcuterie board or grazing table. They're fun for the whole family or a group of friends, and they give each person the ability to craft their own meal. Spread out a piece of parchment paper and layer on the toppings — your cleanup will be simple, too!

Composed salads

Composed salads are where the salad is arranged on a platter rather than in a bowl, and they often create symmetry with lines of vegetables. Cobb salads, tuna Niçoise salads, and chop house salads are often served with toppings individually displayed instead of being tossed. This is a great method for serving a salad at parties, because it allows guests to pick their favorite toppings and then serve the dressing on the side.

Sweet salads

Ready for a blast from the past? Break out the Jell-O and make a sweet salad! Why are gelatin-based salads called salads? The addition of fruit, vegetables, cottage cheese, or nuts makes them a molded salad, hence the classification and inclusion in this book. Although I only include a couple of my favorite molded salads, there are other sweet salads with fruit being the main character in the salad. Check out Chapter 16 when you're craving something sweet!

Building a Salad Formula

This section breaks down the basics of what's in a salad:

Greens + Grains + Protein + Toppings + Dressing = Quick Salad

From this formula, you can create your own bowl, salad bar, or basic side dish. Think of this as a guide, not a script. If you don't have one part, you can simply replace it with another or skip it altogether!

Greens

Lettuce is often the go-to green for a salad, but in many parts of the world, lettuce is hard to come by year-round. Hardier greens, such as kale, spinach, and Swiss chard, are great additions when the weather is cool.

As you read through this book, you will find a recurring theme: my love of fresh herbs. Fresh herbs are a green, just like lettuce. They're often stout with nutrition and the star of many salads around the globe. You can make a salad without lettuce. Start with 1 to 2 cups of greens as a base for salads.

Grains

If I want a salad to stick with me as a dinner entree, I always add a grain such as barley, bulgur, croutons, farro, or rice. I tend to make these in large batches and freeze them for easy additions. You can also buy convenient foods such as frozen grains or microwaveable pouches. If a salad calls for a specific grain, you can pretty much swap that grain for another. I use barley, bulgur, farro, freekeh, and rice in many salads and often swap them out with whatever I have on hand. As for amounts, $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup per salad makes for a serving.

Protein

Animal-based and plant-based proteins both play a key role in building a salad that will keep you full and not make you feel like you're on a diet or eating rabbit food. Stock your pantry or freezer with quick protein foods to help you build a satisfying salad. If you prep grilled meats or boiled eggs in advance, they can be enjoyed throughout the week in varying salads. You can buy convenience foods such as frozen prepared meats or lunch meats. Paired with a bed of greens, this can be a satisfying and quick dinner. Legumes, such as lentils, garbanzo beans, or edamame, add great texture along with fiber and protein. Nuts and seeds are also great options for boosting protein and nutrition in salads. When adding protein to a salad, think about standard serving sizes, such as 3 to 4 ounces for meats, ½ cup for legumes, and ¼ cup for nuts and seeds.

Toppings

Salad toppings are my favorite! I love a good crunch or sweet and salty addition. Adding in nuts, seeds, fried onions, fried noodles, dried fruits, and cheeses can elevate a salad. All you need is 1 or 2 tablespoons to finish off a salad. Keep items on hand in the pantry for these fun additions.

Dressing

You can make even a boring bowl of lettuce turn into something spectacular with the right dressing. Don't skimp on a good dressing, and keep your favorites on hand. When in hurry, make a Classic Italian Vinaigrette or the Simple Citrus Vinaigrette (both in Chapter 6).

Seasonal Considerations

When it comes to shopping and eating for the season, there are a few things to consider:

- » Certain plants are only available during certain times of the year, which can shape what is on your plate.
- » Running an oven in the summer may heat up your home and raise your electric bill, whereas in winter it may be advantageous.
- » Seasonal produce is often less expensive! If the food doesn't have to travel as far to make it to your plate, there are less costs associated with it.



TIP

COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Have you heard of a CSA box? In the United States, *CSA* stands for *community-supported agriculture*, and it has to do with local farmers putting together boxes of seasonal produce for consumers. Head to www.localharvest.org, enter your zip code, and you can find out about local farmers' markets and CSA boxes near you! Shopping seasonally and locally can mean fresher, more nutrient-dense produce. Plus, you're supporting local industry and decreasing the distance food travels to reach your plate.

With the use of greenhouses and hydroponics, more produce is available year-round in the United States, so you can find tomatoes in winter and berries throughout the year. Here's a condensed version of seasonal produce around the United States. Check with your local farmer's market to know what and when produce grows best for your area:

- » **Spring:** Apricots, artichokes, arugula, asparagus, butter lettuce, cabbage, citrus, fava beans, fennel, green beans, peas, pineapple, rhubarb, spinach, Swiss chard, watercress
- » **Summer:** Avocados, beets, bell peppers, berries, cherries, corn, cucumber, eggplant, grapes, green beans, melons, okra, peppers, stone fruit, summer squash, tomatoes, watermelon
- » **Fall:** Apples, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, grapes, lettuce, pears, plums, turnips, winter squash
- » **Winter:** Citrus, collard greens, kale, kiwi, leeks, sweet potatoes, rutabaga, turnips, winter squash



REMEMBER

Seasonal shopping will keep your salad budget in check!

