

Summer Salad

I love it in the summer. Gloria, Denise, Jamise make it. Jamise named it. Skinned and seeded fresh tomatoes, seeded cucumbers, chopped sweet onions, fresh mint.

Dressing is oil and vinegar with little or no garlic, with some red pepper flakes or a sliced Serrano (remove before serving.) Don't rub your eyes.

Salt and pepper, then mix well. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours, mixing a couple of times. Overnight (sans Serrano) is OK too. My friend Emily once remarked that this salad was a bit like Gazpacho. I agree.

Coma bien!

Middle Eastern Slaw

I love this one and it is pretty.

Half red, half green cabbage, a little chopped sweet onion. Dressing is olive oil and lemon only, salt, pepper, and mint

Cut cabbage however you like it, and dress.

Wow! This is some tasty stuff!!

Wilted Spinach and Mushroom

If you like wilted spinach salads, you will love this one.

Fresh spinach, sliced mushrooms. Dressing is oil, vinegar, savory mustard.

Warm olive oil in a skillet over low heat. Add vinegar and mustard, then mushrooms. Heat only until the mushrooms become shiny. Salt and pepper spinach, and mix. Pour warm mixture over spinach and toss gently.

M-m-m-m-m-m-m!!

Plain old tossed salad

And finally we get to the classic tossed salad. Bibb, Belgian endive/ radicchio, or romaine. Garlicky French. Nada más. Dress and toss.

as Jackie Gleason used to say... how sweet it is!! (figuratively speaking only!)

The Ending Part

I hope that you have enjoyed your trip through Charlie's salad book. I had a good time writing it. Please use this book as a guide only. Louis' rule rules. Call to let me know what you liked and didn't like about it.

Christina is getting married in on May 1. First shower was March 7, Chris' bachelor party is April 4, Emily is coming to stay with me April 16, and I am having a dinner party on March 28. I am anticipating a fun spring.

Charlie's Guide to Salad



Dry, dry, dry, dry

Charlie Kafone

It takes four men to dress a salad: a wise man for the salt, a madman for the pepper, a miser for the vinegar, and a spendthrift for the oil.

Spanish proverb

It is good music if you like it.

Louis Armstrong

Dedication

To Christina and David.

To Chris, who is a wonderful cook, but more importantly, makes Christina happy.

Inspiration

I make my lunch nearly every day at Duke. Occasionally, I make a salad of some kind for anyone who wants to eat. That tradition began by my making tuna salad then *salad nicoise* for my friend Laurel and me. I have gotten a few requests for recipes from my colleagues, so I decided to write this little booklet. The three compliments I appreciate most are “you have great kids,” “thanks for what you do in the community,” and “could I have that recipe?” As it relates to latter, “imitation is the...” Thanks for that.

Influences and acknowledgments

I know a lot of great cooks, but three are front and center for me because of life’s circumstances. Each makes tasty salads, and each cooks to the tastes of those who eat her food:

My Mom (her name is Gloria.)

My children’s Mom (her name is Jamise.)

My sister (her name is Denise.)

Since I share Middle Eastern ancestry with each of the above three people, Middle Eastern cooking traditions necessarily influence this guide. Some lemon-only dressings, the generous use of mint, and bulghur are all indicators of our rich heritage.

Another person who makes fabulous salads is my friend Lani Zabor.

And finally to *The Joy of Cooking*, to which I often refer, both here and in the kitchen.

A note or two on writing

The best writing teachers and pundits preach that “less is better.” I have difficulty with that, in speaking and writing, so you may find this text wordy. I am sure most of them would.

My friend Paula and I find that we have a lot in common. One of those commonalities is that we use parentheses more than most. I wish we shared her writing skill, though. I lag well behind her in that regard.

Curly Endive Salad

This is one of my favorite salads which my Mom and her Mom made.

Curly endive is a tasty green. It is somewhat bitter but not in a bad way. It is hearty and remains crisp in salad. Some mix it with other lettuce because of its unique flavor and texture, but I love it by itself. Many times, I add a can of tuna or chick peas or both to make a complete meal.

Curly endive, sweet onion (I prefer red in this salad), lemon only dressing, with a small amount of garlic if you like, and lots of salt and pepper.

Well done, fine chef!

Spinach Avocado

This one is my invention. I love both of the ingredients.

Fresh spinach, sliced avocado, oil and vinegar/lemon, no mustard, no garlic, salt and pepper, and sunflower seeds.

Oh, yum!

Caesar

This classic salad has a wonderful combination of tastes. Also, with chicken or salmon, it makes a great one dish meal.

Romaine, anchovies, Worcestershire sauce, dry mustard, one or two eggs, a brick, or whatever you call it, of parmesan, fresh lemon juice, salt, pepper, croutons, olive oil (reminder: no vinegar.)

Coddle an egg or two (boil for a minute, remove, cool to room temperature.)

Make croutons (tear bread into desired size, sautee garlic in olive oil on medium low heat, remove garlic pieces, turn heat up to medium, add bread until brown, remove to broiler on lowest setting, to get browner and crispy.)

Rub the bottom of a large salad bowl with a *chapon*.

If you like garlic, mince more and put it on the bottom of the bowl.

Add: olive oil, diced or chopped anchovies and its oil, dry mustard, a dash of Worcestershire, salt and pepper, and whisk with a fork until thoroughly mixed.

Tear the romaine into the bowl.

Toss gently a couple of times. Add lemon juice and coddled eggs and toss gently a couple more times. Grate the parmesan and add the croutons and toss gently a couple more times.

Eat and enjoy (finally!)

Salade Caprese (summer only for me)

Large tomatoes, **fresh** mozzarella, fresh basil, low- or no-garlic French.

Alternate thick slices of tomatoes with thick slices of fresh mozzarella. Serve basil as you wish. You may cut it into small pieces and sprinkle it. I like to serve two or three whole basil leaves on each plate.

Pour dressing just before serving. No tossing.

Yuuuummmmmle!!!!!!!!!!!!

Tomato and Onion with Blue Cheese (summer only for me)

Alternate thick slices of large tomatoes and very sweet onions on salad plates.

Dress with garlicky French. Crumble blue cheese or Roquefort on top.

Tasty!

Tabouli (summer only for me)

Fresh tomatoes, parsley, green onions, bulghur (wheat), fresh mint. Buy fine or extra fine grind bulghur from a Middle Eastern grocery. Others usually carry only coarse. This dressing is only lemon and oil, no mustard, no garlic.

DRYING is really important in tabouli because the components are so small.

Rinse the bulghur for at least 15 minutes with a slow stream; squeeze it out.

Wash and DRY the parsley. Get it into fairly small pieces. Here is how I do it:

Tear it off the stems, then tear the pieces. On the parsley, you may cut it once, but move the knife quickly. Don't slice off a finger in the process.

I wouldn't use a food processor, but some do. Denise does; hers is great.

Skin and seed the tomatoes. Dice the scallions. Use some of the green part. Dice the mint at the last minute.

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl, and toss to blend. Add lemon dressing and salt and pepper and toss minimally.

Just in case you haven't gotten the message on this one, it takes a long time to make, but it is soooooo worth it.

Flavor bursts in your mouth!

Asparagus and Hearts of Palm

Barely cook asparagus tips (boil briefly.) Drain hearts of palm pieces thoroughly. Top with fresh ground oregano, arrange on a platter, marinate with French for at least a couple of hours in the frig. Be sure to mix this dressing well because it sits around, giving the ingredients time to separate.

Bon appetit!

Charlie's Pontifications

Welcome to Charlie's guide to salad. Writing this was great fun. I hope you get benefit and enjoyment from it.

Let's begin with the three rules you found on the cover.

Louis' rule is the most important of all. By definition, music or art or salad or wine is considered good only if its consumer likes it. Enjoy your salads regardless of what anyone else thinks. While you should be mindful of the tastes of your audience, make salads you love. The light shines through.

Charlie's rule is far and away the most important technical one, at least in his not so humble opinion. Any lettuce which goes into your salad bowl needs to be clean and **dry, dry, dry, dry**. There are at least two reasons:

- 1) You want the dressing to stick to the leaves, not slide off of them; dressing at the bottom of a bowl doesn't do much good. Oil resists mixing with vinegar/lemon (if you don't believe me, pour a little oil and vinegar in a jar and see what happens.) Introducing water compounds the problem.
- 2) You want to eat crisp vegetables. The dressing will wilt the vegetables enough, without introducing water.

El proverbio español has four parts. Let's discuss them one at a time.

Spendthrift for oil: Don't overdress your salad (I am frequently guilty of this crime against lettuce.)

Miser for vinegar (or lemon): it should be more of an enhancer than a flavor.

Wiseman for salt: to taste.

Madman for pepper (and spices): they should provide the flavor.

Charlie's Salad Philosophy

On the kitchen

If I am complimented, I keep perspective. Using fresh, tasty ingredients, making what you love, and following a few simple rules goes a long way.

On Lettuce

For a detailed explanation of flavor and texture nuances and nutrition information, look in the *Joy of Cooking* or your cookbook. This guide is written based on Louis' rule, so you will read about my favorites.

Romaine, spinach, Belgian endive (with radicchio), curly endive, Mesclun, and Bibb. I like Iceberg and leaf lettuce less. I eat, but don't buy, them.

On dressing

I don't make creamy dressings because I don't like them.

Dressing made with oil, vinegar, lemon, dry mustard, and spices is called French dressing in every country except... France, where it is called vinaigrette. I use French because it is easier to spell. (And, no, the red stuff Kraft sells doesn't resemble French.) I don't ever use sugar in dressing.

I generally shake dressing in a small jar, but sometimes use a blender or food processor, particularly if marinating. Remember that salad dressing ingredients are generally not friendly to each other and will use any opportunity to separate. When possible, add an emulsifier like dry or prepared mustard. It helps blend and adds flavor.

On oils

I use only olive oil. A general rule is to use 'extra virgin' and 'first cold pressed', but experiment and use what tastes good to you. Neither my mother nor my sister ever use olive oil because they don't like the taste it adds. They use corn or safflower oil or a blend, and I like their salads a lot.

On vinegar

I don't use Balsamic. I like red wine vinegar, and buy Alessio when I find it. Use lemon with the vinegar to round the flavor. Fresh from good lemons is best, but bottled (especially if it says 'not from concentrate') is OK too.

On proportions

Oil/vinegar-lemon: 3 or 4 parts oil to one part vinegar or lemon. I tend more toward the 4, but not always. Louis' rule here.

Vinegar/lemon: I like various proportions, depending on the salad. Unless all lemon or all vinegar is noted here, I leave the proportions to your taste.

On tossing

To alleviate sogginess, dress salad just prior to serving, and toss as little as it takes to coat the vegetables. Salt just prior to serving, or add it to the dressing, because salt draws water out of lettuce. If you are comfortable with doing so, toss your salad by hand. Use sanitary gloves if you wish.

On prep

Don't use a knife on any kind of lettuce. It may brown the edges. Tear it.

Don't whirl your salad ingredients in a spinner because, as someone says, "it is like a ride in a jail wagon." A better way is to shake some of the surface water off, then wrap it in paper towels and put it in the frig for a few hours. Having said all of that, I often spin because I don't have the luxury of several hours.

On tomatoes

If you use them in a tossed salad, seed them; the seeds are surrounded by water. Except for those salads with thick sliced tomatoes, I also peel them because the skin is sometimes tough and bitter. I don't use tomatoes unless they are grown outdoors, and locally or at least nearby. That is especially true when tomatoes are the star attraction (e.g., *salad caprese*.) Trucks and cardboard boxes are not ideal ripening conditions. I prefer dirt.

On garlic

Unless you are a garlic fanatic (like me), garlic your salad by rubbing the sides and bottom of the bowl with a split clove of garlic (called a *chapon*.)

Alternatively, when you mix the dressing, chop garlic and let it sit for a while in the dressing before removing the remains. For garlicky dressing, mince garlic and mix it with the dressing. (Press it, or mash it with a fork together with salt on a cutting board, or use a mortar and pestle, or buy it in a jar.) If you mix garlic with dressing, take extra measures to blend.

On salt and pepper

I use generally use iodized salt, but will use sea salt if I have it. Use fresh ground black pepper from peppercorns when possible. As soon as you open a box of ground pepper, it begins to degrade.

Salad ideas

There are many ways to make a salad. The ones I list here are my favorites. The above rules for proportions and for prep apply to all salads.

Salade nicoise

Tuna, Mesclun, boiled small red or other potatoes, cut into large bite-sized pieces, olive pieces, anchovies, tomatoes (in season), boiled eggs, green beans, sweet red onion, capers (I don't like capers so I don't use them.)

Boil potatoes and green beans until each are just done (do little more than blanch the green beans.) Allow them to cool at room temperature.

Dice a small amount of onion and add it along with a little Dijon mustard, lemon, salt and pepper to the tuna. You may do this in advance.

Arrange as you wish. You may GENTLY toss the vegetables (including rings of the onion) in garlicky French, then GENTLY spoon out onto the Mesclun, or you may arrange the vegetables on the Mesclun and coat with dressing then toss all together. Scoop tuna on top and serve with some good French bread.

Wowowowowow!!!!!!