

Autumn Harvest Fall Salads

When deciding upon what type of salad to make, it's best to use produce that is as fresh and seasonal as possible. Whether your ingredients are picked from your garden or bought from the market, foods that are harvested closest to home will offer the best value for your money, palate and health. A few seasonal salad ingredients to look for this time of year include fruits such as apples, pears, cranberries and grapes, and vegetables such as fennel, cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli.

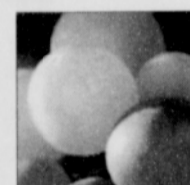


Pears

It's also the time of year to sample all types of pears, the "aristocrat" of fruit. When buying fresh pears, select pears with even color and a slight blush. Be careful when handling pears because they are delicate and bruise easily. Quick hint: To keep pear slices from browning, sprinkle them with lemon juice and place them in a water bath--or serve them immediately after slicing.

Cranberries

Fresh cranberries often seem to get forgotten, due to their tart character. Try using fresh cranberries not just in homemade sauces and pies, but also as beautiful salad garnishes. Dried cranberries add sweetness and a chewy texture to salads.



Grapes

Grapes are harvested when sweet and ripe, so look for plump clusters that are firmly attached to green stems. Once at home, refrigerate grapes until ready to use, and then rinse with cold water, halve them, and toss them in your favorite salad.

Greek Veggie Salad

"This salad is easy and attractive, offering a wonderful combination of flavors. Make it a day ahead and let chill overnight for best results."



INGREDIENTS

- 1 head cauliflower, chopped
- 1 head broccoli, chopped
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes
- 1 (6 ounce) can small pitted black olives, drained
- 1 (6 ounce) package tomato basil feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 (16 ounce) bottle zesty Italian dressing

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the cauliflower, broccoli, cherry tomatoes, olives and cheese. 2. Add enough dressing to coat, toss and refrigerate overnight.



Apple Avocado Salad with Tangerine Dressing

"This easy salad is perfect for any meal and it is very filling. You wouldn't think this mixture of apples, avocados, blue cheese and tangerine dressing would go together, but it's wonderful!"

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (10 ounce) package baby greens
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/3 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest
- 1 apple - peeled, cored and sliced
- 4 mandarin oranges, juiced
- 1 avocado - peeled, pitted and diced
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, toss together the baby greens, red onion, walnuts, blue cheese, and lemon zest. 2. Mix in the apple and avocado just before serving.

Tangerine Dressing

In a container with a lid, mix the mandarin orange juice, lemon juice, lemon zest, garlic, olive oil and salt. Drizzle over the salad as desired. Contains a mere 143 calories per serving.

Fennel and Watercress Salad

"This salad would be a welcome addition to any holiday dinner table."



INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup pecan halves, toasted
- 6 bunches watercress - rinsed, dried and trimmed
- 1/2 cup chopped dried cranberries
- 3 bulbs fennel - trimmed, cored and thinly sliced
- 3 small heads radicchio, cored and chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large salad bowl, combine the watercress, fennel, radicchio and pecans. 2. Stir the vinaigrette and pour over salad. 3. Toss well and serve at once.

Cranberry Vinaigrette

In a bowl, combine the cranberries, red wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, garlic and salt. Whisk in the olive oil.

Fennel

Fennel is available from fall through spring and adds a hint of fresh sweet licorice flavor to any salad. This aromatic plant is pale green with a celery-like stem and feathery foliage. Its root base and stems can be treated like a vegetable and baked, braised, or sliced and eaten raw in salads. The greenery can be used as a garnish or snipped like dill to enhance many recipes. Fennel's licorice-like flavor is sweeter and more delicate than anise and, when cooked, becomes even lighter and softer than in its raw state.



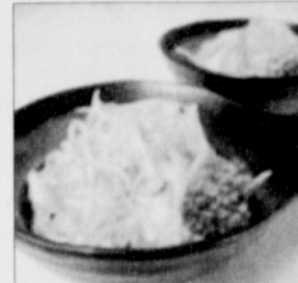
Cabbage

The cabbage family is wide and varied: broccoli and cauliflower are members. Some of the best heads of cabbage for salads are the crinkled-leaf "Savoy" types, also sold as Napa, January King or Wivoy cabbage. These are thin-leaved, tender, mild, and tasty. When choosing a head of cabbage, look for fresh, crisp leaves that are firmly packed; the head should feel heavy for its size.



Cauliflower and Broccoli

These vegetables are available year-round, but especially plentiful in the spring and late fall. When buying cauliflower, select one that is white or creamy white in color, firm and heavy. Cauliflower may be stored for up to one week in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Keep it dry and any brownish colored portions may be trimmed away before cooking. When shopping for broccoli, look for leaves and stems with dark green heads. Look for tender, young stalks that are firm with compact buds in the head. Yellow flowers in buds or very rough bumpy heads may indicate broccoli is past its prime.



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