

# THE simple FEAST

fast

fresh

one-dish

healthy

gourmet

lo-calorie

## THE simple FEAST

by Muriel Stockdale



## About this book

A simple principle for fast and easy  
homemade, healthy food.

# THE simple FEAST

How to create your own original one-dish, healthy, gourmet, low calorie and fresh meals in less than 1/2 an hour.

by muriel stockdale  
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## Salad Secrets

zest

oil

green

tang

ornament

- SALAD SECRETS

This is the smallest cookbook you'll ever need with the largest promise.

I know you want ½ hour, healthy meals let me also add gourmet, one-dish and low calorie to that. This is a principle for creating a meal that has completely changed my life and liberated me from mealtime torture.

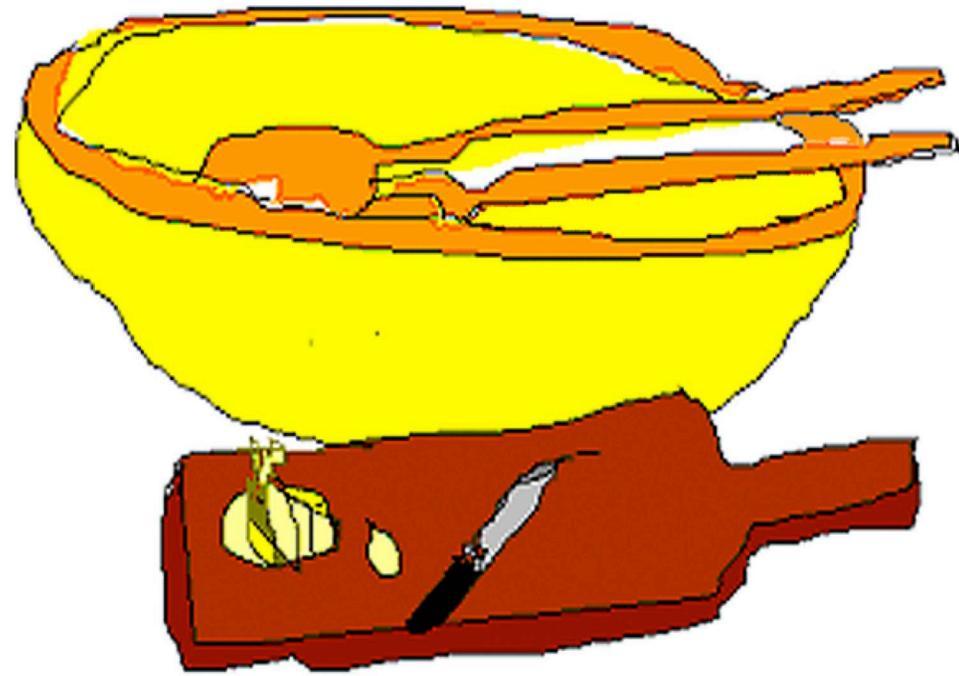
It began when my friend Pamela invited me to lunch one day many years ago. At that time the best I could do with a salad was a seasoning packet bought from the supermarket and mixed in a cruet with any oil and any vinegar. I wished then that I knew what to do with seasonings, I still wish I knew but now I know how to experiment and invent, this is my gift to you.

This is a brave, exciting, fresh and liberated way of cooking. There are no rules, there are no recipes, and there are no mistakes. There are only daily adventures with no two meals alike, unless you take the time to write out your recipes.

Chris, my husband, who will eat almost anything and is probably an easy test subject repeatedly, tells me “this meal is the best I’ve ever eaten”. Is he just being nice? I don’t think so because I enjoy this kind of food as much as he does and I am a much fussier eater.

We will start with the salad. Even Chris, who admits that he is no cook and I think is proud of that, has learned the principle and always makes a fabulous salad, when he makes one. So this is the trick that Pamela taught me. It may seem like a recipe here but remember it is not. This is a principle for salad making and I will show you how to apply it to your own taste and satisfaction.

Take a nice large wooden salad bowl. Ideally it could be one of those wide-open Vermont style bowls that make tossing very easy.





Step 1. ZEST

## Step 1. ZEST

I must point out that there are no recipes in this little book only suggestions to inspire you to your own culinary creativity.

The principle is laid out in steps of construction for your fabulous salad. Zest is the foundational yummy something. Very often that is garlic but it could be anchovies, or chutney, peanut butter, ginger any number of delicious strong flavors that you like.

I start by tossing them into the bowl first. Garlic gets pressed into the wood and turned into paste right there.

To create your own original one of a kind one time ZEST for your dressing you can start with any of the zest ingredients either alone or in combination. You may think of all sorts of other things that you might prefer, just add them to your list.

I frequently start with garlic. I love the fact that it's so healthy and guards against colds and flue and the occasional Vampire. It's a great foundation for almost any dressing but if you don't like garlic you could start with ginger. Ginger, I think is an equally healthy food. Both are purported to increase the digestive fire and promote healthy digestion.

My suggestion is that you start out slow. Some guaranteed good combinations are garlic and ginger crushed together in about equal amounts or to your own personal taste. How about a much loved basic like honey and mustard which appeals to the sweet tooth? Try Fig jam and garlic for a salad with chunks of Manchego cheese. Use Cranberry jelly for a salad with turkey slices or apple slices or maybe marmalade with duck.



זיתים  
Olives

You can add nut butters, soy sauce, hot oil, Try Wasabi green mustard and mayonnaise, which I invented by experimenting in the very method I am recommending here. Since then I have encountered wasabi/mayo all over the place . Good ideas are in the ether waiting for us all to use them.

I hope this clarifies the principle of inventiveness that you can employ here.

So go to town. Choose from the list next and add your own ideas at the bottom.

Photo: Lunch buffet at the Scots Hotel overlooking the Sea of Galilee by Muriel Stockdale

#### ZESTS:

Garlic	Olive paste
Jam	Chili peppers
Marmalade	Anchovy
Blue cheese	Ginger
Honey	Prunes
Wasabi Mustard	Lemon zest
Peanut butter	Orange zest
Cranberry sauce	Hoy Sin sauce
Sun dried tomatoes	Basil leaves
Pesto	Dates
Chutney	

Add your favorite zests here:

When you decide to become adventurous, a simple technique for testing without waste is to take a small sample of what you would like to add to your mix and then waft it over the other flavor and inhale them in combination. This is my foolproof premixing test.

Well almost foolproof I did have to throw out one dressing once, but only one in about 12 years. If you don't trust your sense of smell mix tiny amounts in a spoon and taste them before you throw everything into the salad bowl.

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Photo:  
Fort Hill Farm CSA Summer Share

by Muriel Stockdale





Step 2.

OIL

## Step 2. OIL

Remember that OIL plays a very important role in a salad dressing. It effectively distributes the delicious flavors that you choose and it lubricates the dry ingredients. Finally, it adds a valuable nutritional component that can be ratcheted up several notches if you choose Flax seed oil which is delicious and chock full of Omega 3 fatty acids.

I find that a standard ‘no think’ salad always comes out great if I choose an olive oil or flax seed oil. You may also want to create your own specialty oils by adding a few cloves of fresh garlic, rosemary or some hot chili peppers directly to the bottle and allowing it to steep for a while. The flavor of the oil can become an inherent part of your mix so choose carefully. Add any other oils that you may prefer or discover to the list.

### OILS:

Flax Seed oil      Almond oil

Olive oil          Peanut oil

Sesame oil        Hot oil

Coconut oil

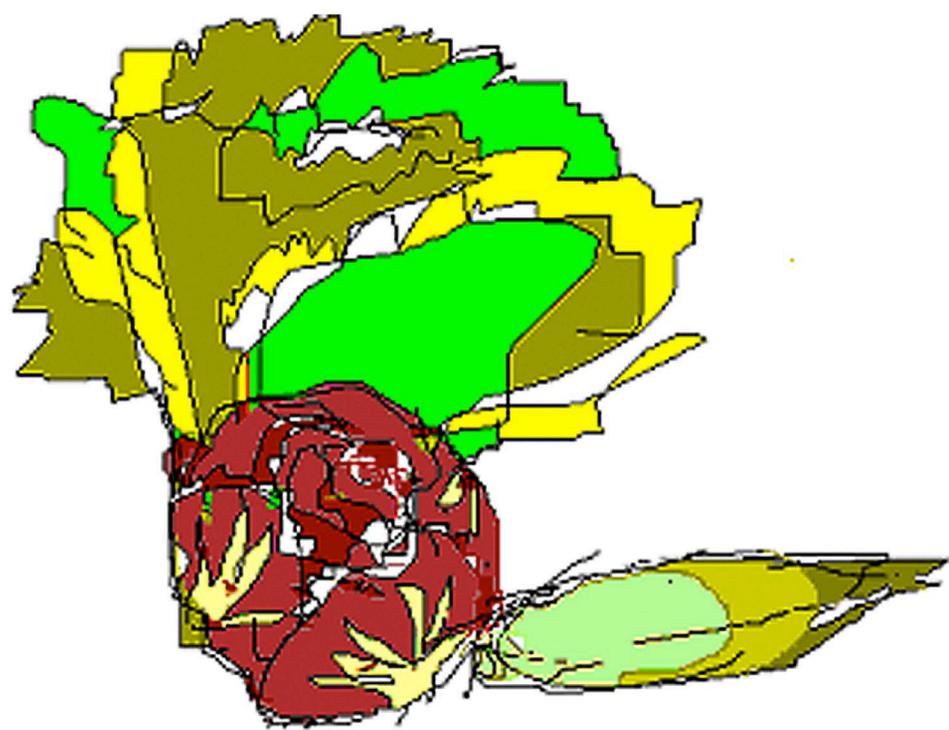
Toasted Sesame oil

Extra virgin olive oil

Add more favorites here:

Perhaps you would prefer not to use oil at all in your salad in which case you can use something like mayonnaise, sour cream, kefir or yogurt.

Step 3. GREEN



### Step 3. GREEN

Here comes the body of your salad. That means whatever green stuff you choose.

We are so blessed these days by the amazing produce available to us. Growing up in England the only greens I knew were Brussels sprouts and sugar snap peas. When I was in High School the only lettuce I knew was iceberg but now we can choose from an astonishing variety of shapes, colors, tastes and textures.

I sometimes adventure into Chinatown where I can find even more interesting greens. We've enjoyed some delicious nutty and spicy leaves. If you are worried about the power of your choice tone it down a bit by adding it to something familiar. For example if you find arugula too strong, mix it with mostly green leaf or red leaf lettuce.

Here is a list of green and not green salad choices. Again feel free to add your own favorites.

Romaine	Red leaf
Green leaf	Arugula
Endive	Radicchio
Frisseé	Mesclun
Iceburg	Baby Spinach
Dandelion	Lola rosa
Red Cabbage	Green Cabbage
Water Cress	Curly Cabbage
Boston lettuce	Red Oak

Depending on the previous ingredients I sometimes like to add tasty leaves into the salad at this time. The beauty of a salad is the medley of tastes and textures and the addition of surprising leaves can really improve the mealtime adventure.

You can easily rely on tried and true themes at this point. For example if you plan to ornament your salad with beefsteak tomatoes and chunks of fresh mozzarella you almost have to throw in some Basil. Or you can experiment and invent a new combination like slices of spicy sausages, which I find to be favorably complemented by tangy cilantro.

You will want to be careful with your additions of these leaves as they can be overpowering and you may need only a delicate touch. Listed next are my favorite suggestions of tasty leaf additions.

#### SPICY LEAVES:

Cilantro	Basil
Thyme	Oregano
Mint	Lemon mint
Tarragon	Rosemary
Chives	Parsley
Clover sprouts	Dill
Sorrel	Marjoram
Sage	Broccoli sprouts
Mustard sprouts	Alfalfa sprouts
Mung bean sprouts	Japanese Seaweeds
Add more here:	



Step 4. TANG



#### step 4 TANG

This is where you add zip or TANG to your salad. This is the ingredient that can make your salad perfect. So be sure to make it something special and delicious and titillating to your own personal taste. Lately my favorite is lime juice.

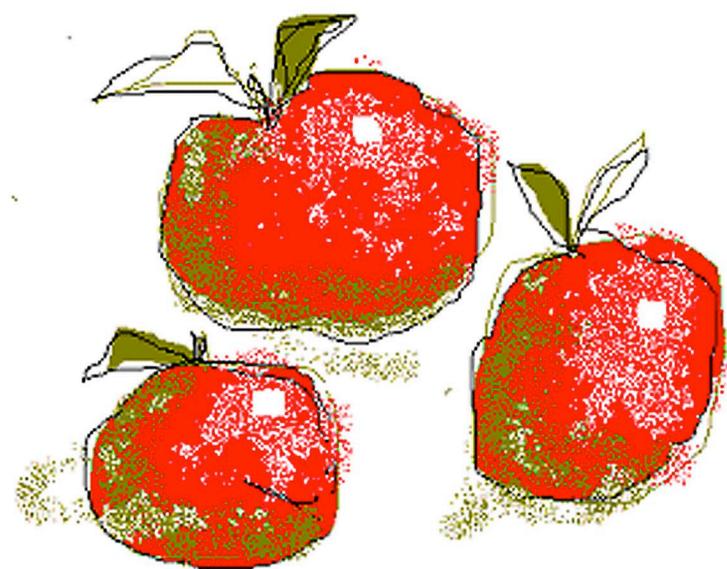
Just a dash of TANG lightly sprinkled over the greens is good. I also really like Balsamic vinegar. I found out about it when I was given an opening night gift for a show at the Vineyard theatre in New York City. The producers gave the cast and crew each bottle of Vineyard Balsamic. I thought it was wine at first and I was confused about what to do with it but now I will be forever grateful to them. Vinegar was just a bore to me for so many years and did nothing for a salad dressing until I discovered Balsamic vinegar, which opened up a whole new world of easy and always delicious salads. So I suggest Balsamic for your first test salad.

As I said you can always substitute vinegar with lemon juice, lime, grapefruit or orange juice. You can also use sour cream, yogurt, and mayonnaise, or pickle juice. Use the white wine vinegar to launder your plastic shower curtains, they'll sparkle.

Malt vinegar	Balsamic vinegar
Lemon juice	Orange juice
Celery vinegar	Grapefruit juice
Lime juice	Raspberry vinegar
Thyme vinegar	Shallot vinegar
Sour cream	Mayonnaise
Pickle juice	Sauerkraut juice
Tartar sauce	Cocktail sauce
Yogurt	Bragg's Amino Acids
Balsamic reduction	
Red wine vinegar	

Put additional tangy choices here:

Step 5. ORNAMENT



## Step 5. ORNAMENTS

Finally, you can add your ornaments to the salad. These are the fun surprises that make each salad special.

Adding the ORNAMENTS becomes the most fun part of the salad and by now you are almost done. Even if you started each salad with garlic and the same oil and the same leaves you could have a radical eating adventure every time you eat by changing the ornaments.

You can add as much of your chosen ingredients as you like and you can also add many different ingredients. This is where the type of salad becomes established.

If you are serving a salad starter you'll want to keep it light and in keeping with the theme of your meal. However, the great thing about this method of making a salad is that you can expand it and enjoy a different delicious meal every night of the summer.

An inspiring place to start for me is the market place. Aside from the basics, I rarely decide before shopping what I will come home with. If I see a particularly enticing sausage I may decide to start with that, then I am led to collect the rest of my ingredients to complement that sausage. I may start with the leaves or a seasonal fruit or a particularly inspiring cheese, it is a thing of the moment, which is another important principle of this kind of meal preparation.

Harissa  
2frs90 les  
100g

Olives Aux choix  
2frs50 les  
100g



mentale

tomates séchées

The ornament additions listed next are categorized and you may want to choose from columns as you fancy. So go to town and feast on the most simple of meals - a salad.

FRUITS:

Tomatoes	Olives
Cucumber	Apple
Pear	Avocado
Orange	Banana
Raisins	Dates
Prunes	Figs
Strawberries	Grapes
Peach	Bell pepper
Pineapple	Kiwi
Banana chips	Mushrooms
Papaya	Kumquats
Summer squash	Dried cranberries
Sugar snap peas	Artichoke hearts
Roasted eggplant	Roasted bell pepper

Add your fruits here:

Photo: Olive stand - Barcelona

by Muriel Stockdale

VEGETABLES:

Celery	Fennel
Jicama	Vidalia onion
Red Onion	Carrots
Cooked beets	Snow peas
Radish	Cooked green beans
Grilled asparagus	Corn kernels

Your favorites here:

CARBOHYDRATES:

Pasta	Croutons
Wild rice	Cooked corn
Quinoa	Millet
Barley	

Add your favorite carbs here:

CHEESES:

Add them in sliver thin slices or grated, coarse or fine.

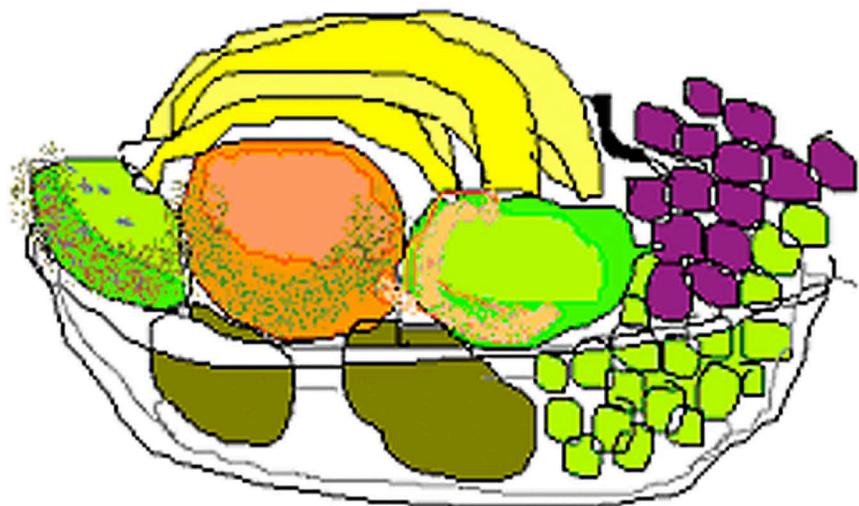
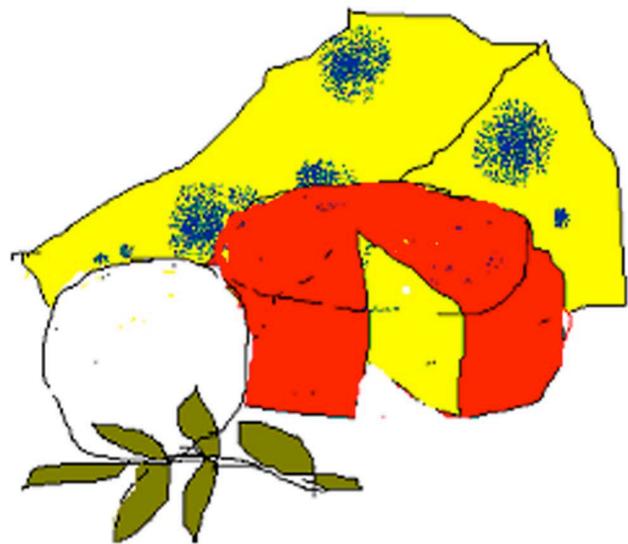
Fresh mozzarella	Asiago
Blue cheese	Feta cheese
Warm Brie	Cheddar cheese
Goat cheese	Gouda
Swiss cheese	Parmesan
Romano	Monterey Jack
Ricotta cheese	Cottage cheese

Add more cheeses here:

NUTS:

Walnuts	Peanuts
Sunflower seeds	Roasted Peas
Almonds	Pinoli nuts
Pecans	Hazelnuts
Grated coconut	

Add more favorite nuts:



MEATS:

Grilled Chicken	Cooked Sausages
Ham	Smoked Turkey
Crabmeat	Steak
Roast beef	Country paté
Duck	Prosciutto
Pastrami	Chicken liver

Add your favorite meats here:

FISH:

Anchovies	Sable plate
Cooked salmon	Tuna
Smoked salmon	Cooked shrimp
Cooked crabmeat	Smoked Trout
Lobster	

Add more fish choices here:

OTHER PROTEINS:

Hard-boiled eggs	Tofu
Fried tofu	Red kidney beans
Chick Peas	Black beans
Black eyed peas	

Add more protein choices here:

CONDIMENTS:

Pickled Ginger	Half sour pickles
Mini gherkins	Capers
Hot Chili Peppers	Mango chutney

Your condiment list:



## EDIBLE FLOWERS:

Make sure that your flowers are organic and free of pesticides.

Borage

Yellow mums

Roses

Violets

Pansies

Mint

Dendrobium orchids

Add more flowers here:

Marigold

White mums

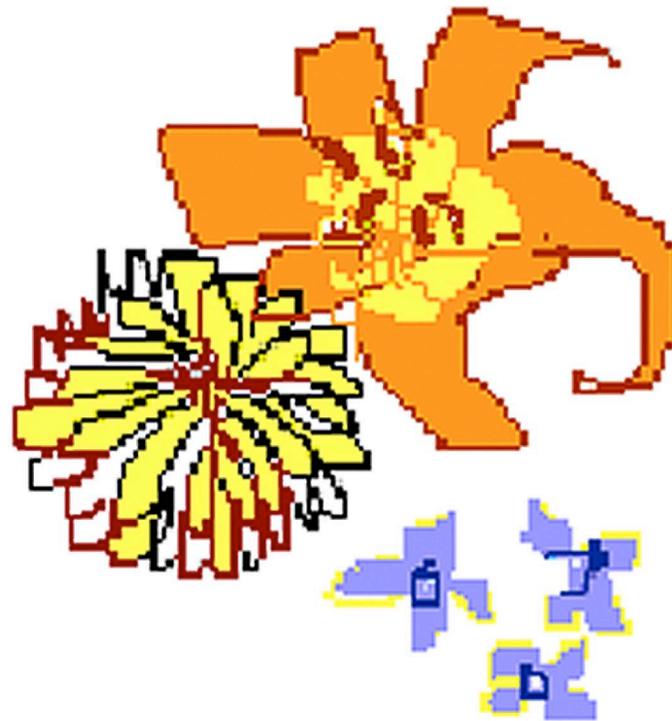
Nasturtiums

Day lilies

Fennel

Squash blossoms

Bachelor buttons



There you have it, five simple steps that lead to a terrific salad in less than ½ an hour.

The ingredients in each section can be mixed and matched to create an infinite variety of gourmet salads. This method promises both a terrific light dish to start a meal or a satisfying dish to be your complete meal. Now you can do whatever you want with this salad or you can continue to practice by following my suggestions.

Remember I am not writing recipes here I am sharing a principle and it is up to you to customize each meal. It's not as difficult as that sounds, it actually makes things a lot easier. You will find that looking at the greens aisle in the supermarket is inspiring. You will discover that you have the makings of a meal when you thought you had nothing to eat at home.

There are no recipes in this little book I only offer suggestions to inspire you to your own culinary creativity. However, in case you are overwhelmed by the lists I want to share a few ideas that I have about how to combine your ingredients.

Follow my practice suggestions next and you will create a very basic and simple salad.

## your first original salad

garlic & blue cheese

extra virgin olive oil

mesclun greens

balsamic vinegar

slivered fuji apple

So here's how to make your first salad by this method.

Garlic with blue cheese  
Extra Virgin Olive oil  
Mesclun greens  
Balsamic vinegar  
Slivered Fuji Apple and

Crush at least ½ a clove of garlic into the wood in the bottom of your bowl with a wooden spoon. Use as much garlic as you like though. Reduce the garlic to a paste in the bottom of the bowl.

Drizzle the olive oil into the bowl and mix with the garlic and cheese.

For your first experiment I suggest assorted mesclun greens. They're attractive and can be enough variety by themselves for a simple salad. Drop the greens into the bowl and toss them lightly into the oil until they are coated throughout.

Why don't you try a slivered Fuji apple for this test salad? It will go very well with the blue cheese and the mesclun greens. But if you prefer a more tart or sweeter apple or a pear that's totally up to you.

Another way to inspire your original creation is to think of dishes or food combinations that you like. A leafy green salad based on a traditional Waldorf salad makes a terrific meal and it doesn't matter how right you get it. Start with a dressing based on mayonnaise instead of the blue cheese recommended before. Feel free to throw in some cooked chicken, walnuts, celery and halved grapes as your ornaments with the apple. Now you have a Waldorf salad.

I never bother to measure any of the ingredients.

Photo: Window box tomatoes, Sherman, CT by Muriel Stockdale



Be daring and adventurous; go for it. Your own salad is nothing like an average salad bar salad or grabbed lunch; you will find that there is something more delicious and definitely more nourishing about it.

You may consider the temperature, the weather and the location before creating your salad meal. A nice outdoor summer meal could be Boston lettuce and cilantro in garlic and oil, ornamented by baked salmon and capers. It's simple light and very delicious.

Another favorite dressing choice of mine as I mentioned earlier is made with mayonnaise and wasabi mustard, I ornament the greens with grilled tuna, pickled ginger and crunchy Japanese roasted peas. Be aware that this is a fabulous way to use leftovers. In fact, make sure that you cook extra fish or chicken or sausage so that you will be able to make the salad faster the next day.



Photo: Buffet table Scots Hotel - Sea of Galilee  
by Muriel Stockdale

## caesar salad

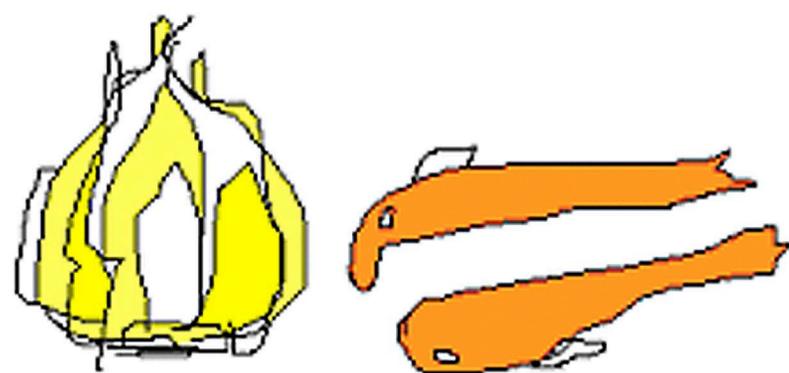
garlic & anchovy

extra virgin olive oil

romaine lettuce

mayonaisse

slivered asiago cheese &  
croutons



## CAESAR SALAD

Garlic and anchovy is the first step to a classic Caesar salad and you'll make one better than any you've had in a restaurant.

Again, crush the garlic into the bowl then crush a couple of Anchovies in with it. Easier though is Anchovy paste, which just needs to be mixed with your garlic paste in the bottom of your salad bowl.

Pour some oil over and mix it into the zest.

Add romaine lettuce - whole leaves or large chunks and a spoon to taste of mayonnaise. Toss with slivered asiago cheese (my favorite yours may be parmesan) and croutons.

## WINTER SALAD

A great way to make any salad better on a cold winter day is to toss the ingredients for a split second into a large saucepan or a wok and stir them over the heat. Do this only long enough to warm the ingredients and not long enough to break down the fibers and extract the water from the lettuce.

You can throw bigger chunkier ingredients in first so that they will heat through and throw the lettuce in last. You are in for a special treat when you try this, remember be very light and quick.

One final thought that I would like to share with you on my personal principles of salad making is on how to cut the fruits and vegetables. I like my salad to be well integrated and no matter what you do you will always find some things falling to the bottom of the bowl. However, I have a basic trick to alleviate this problem. I always slice my ingredients so that they will interface evenly and completely with the lettuce.

So by now I think you have the principle of the meal. You will never need another salad recipe or salad dressing recipe only your own natural intelligence and inspiration.

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For example, chunks of avocado, Jarlsberg or tomato will always separate and sink if they are in chunks. But if you slice them thin they will stay well mixed in and find their way to the plates equally. If you prefer the taste of avocado in chunks, Boconcino cheese in balls or cherry tomatoes whole then serve them on the side or simply plop them onto the individual plate once the salad is served.

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