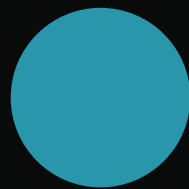


PEARSON NEW INTERNATIONAL EDITION



Food Fundamentals
Margaret McWilliams
Tenth Edition

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Figure 3

Caesar salad can be a very pleasing accompaniment to a meal featuring a hearty entrée. Courtesy of Plycon Press.



Arrangement and Shape

All food has the potential for beauty, but salads offer the greatest opportunity to create artistic and tempting arrangements (Figure 5). Whether a salad is being plated for individuals or for all of the diners, there are four aspects to consider: (1) appropriate plate or bowl, (2) use of a lettuce cup or other liner, (3) the main body of the salad, and (4) possible use of a garnish to serve as an accent.

Be sure to use a plate or bowl large enough to hold the salad comfortably. If components are arranged so precariously that removal of a single piece appears to be tempting gravity, diners will have trouble approaching the salad with enthusiasm for fear that the whole arrangement may slide right off the plate. For a more artistic look, try to arrange ingredients to give some height to part of the salad. This could simply be avocado slices fanned atop a salad of mixed greens to elevate the center.

A frame of salad greens often adds a unifying component to provide the diner with a truly beautiful and tempting salad. Ingredients should not extend to the edge of the plate or bowl. Greens hanging over the edge of the plate make a salad look poorly prepared and disheveled.

Figure 4

Orange slices are garnished with shredded coconut and dried cherries to complete this carefully composed salad. Courtesy of Plycon Press.





Figure 5

A green leaf adds a pleasing line to this shredded green papaya salad featuring Thai ingredients. Courtesy of Plycon Press.

Care given to making attractive salads can pay real dividends; a salad with asparagus spears loses its appeal when the stalks are carelessly tossed on a plate. On the other hand, these same spears become a tempting unit when they are aligned neatly as a center of interest for a composed vegetable salad. This same attention should be given whether arranging individual salads or a buffet salad platter. Balance between various parts of the arrangement is necessary, along with a definite center of interest.

Designs in salad arrangements can be orderly, yet abstract. Some people approach salad making with the air of a serious painter. When a pear half and some added decoration are merged to create a rabbit or peach halves are used to make a snowman, children may be delighted, but many adults will not applaud. The anticipated design preferences of the people who will be eating the salad should serve as the guide to the design approach to use.

Color

Salads have the potential of providing a wonderful, bright touch in a meal. By developing an awareness of color and the potential of various ingredients for heightening color interest and harmony, truly beautiful salads can be created. Sometimes the use of color may be understated, as is the case when a mixed greens salad is made by drawing upon the full spectrum of greens, from perhaps the deep green of spinach or romaine, the medium to almost yellow green of butter lettuce, to the rather light green of iceberg lettuce. Red leaf lettuce, radicchio, and endive are just some of the other salad greens available to augment the color palette (Figure 6).



Figure 6

Coleslaw featuring red and green cabbage is even more colorful with the addition of julienne carrots and chopped green and red peppers. Courtesy of Plycon Press.

A sharp contrast to monochromatic greens is a colorful tossed salad made with not only a variety of greens but also cherry tomatoes, slivers of red cabbage, chopped green onions, various colors of sweet peppers, radish slices, and bits of celery. A Waldorf salad can lack color if the apples are pared, but yellow-skinned Golden Delicious and bright Red Delicious apples cut into cubes sporting their colorful skins and accented by Flame Tokay grapes will brighten any meal.

INGREDIENT HIGHLIGHT

OLIVES

Olives of various types may be available to add interest to different salads. Choices are not limited to the familiar green Spanish olives and black ripe olives. All olives are processed, because they are inedible as they come from the tree. It is the type and length of processing that determines the color, texture, flavor, and appearance of the specific olives in the market.

As the name suggests, green olives are picked before they are fully ripened, but not until they have matured to the desired size. They are held in a lye solution as their first processing step. Next is a series of rinses in water before brining in a salt solution. Fermentation occurs during the two to three months required for the acidity to drop to pH 3.7. The yellow-green color of the green olives is maintained by keeping them immersed in brine to prevent contact with oxygen.

In contrast to green olives, black olives are picked when ripe (Figure 7) and are processed in brine without undergoing the lye-treatment used on green olives. These differences

cause black olives to be somewhat higher in oil than green olives and to have a softer texture and milder flavor.

When buying green olives, choices available include pitted and stuffed (using pimiento, or sometimes almonds or capers). Manzanilla and Sevillano are varieties of olives often processed and marketed as stuffed green olives, the latter being the larger size. Picholine is a green olive that the French value for its tartness and crisp texture.

Black olives are most commonly marketed simply as ripe olives, pitted or unpitted and sometimes sliced. However, some markets afford a broader range of choices. Kalamata are purplish-black olives used in Greek salads. They have a soft texture and a mild, slightly smoky flavor that may be heightened by using some red wine vinegar. Nicoise olives are the dark ripe olives chosen by the French when making their famous Nicoise salad (Nicoise olives, green beans, tuna, potatoes, and anchovies dressed with a vinaigrette flavored with Dijon mustard).



Figure 7

Ripe olives are harvested in Italy, the first step toward making black olives.

Courtesy of June Kalajian Froncillo.

Flavor

The flavors provided by a salad need to combine well and enhance the total flavor impression of a meal. An accompaniment salad with julienne strips of a cheese containing a touch of hot peppers can provide zip to a bland meal; a fruit-filled gelatin salad may be served to offset the saltiness of ham in a dinner.

The ingredients should combine to provide a pleasing impression of the flavor of the salad. A touch of green pepper cut into a coleslaw does wonders in heightening the flavor of the cabbage, whereas the addition of cauliflower pieces is of little value in enhancing the flavor of the salad. Skillful addition of herbs and spices also can add flavor highlights. Celery seed, dill weed, and mustard are but a few of the possibilities in the spice rack. For instance, celery seed and mustard, when augmented with diced fresh onion, add flavor excitement to a potato salad (Figure 8).

Texture

A variety of textures within a salad can be very helpful in creating an appealing salad. Crisp and soft textures combine well. The comparatively soft texture of tuna fish or tofu contrasts with textural accents of crispness provided by diced fresh celery and green pepper. The softness of a tomato wedge complements the crispness of the greens in a tossed salad.

The texture of other foods in the meal also needs to be considered when planning a salad. A meal of mashed potatoes, baked fish, and sliced avocado certainly provides a monotonous texture. This menu could be improved by substituting a crisp vegetable salad for the avocado. On the other hand, crisp fried chicken would present a pleasing contrast to the avocado salad. Many different approaches are available; the important point is to consider the texture of both the salad alone and the salad with the rest of the meal.

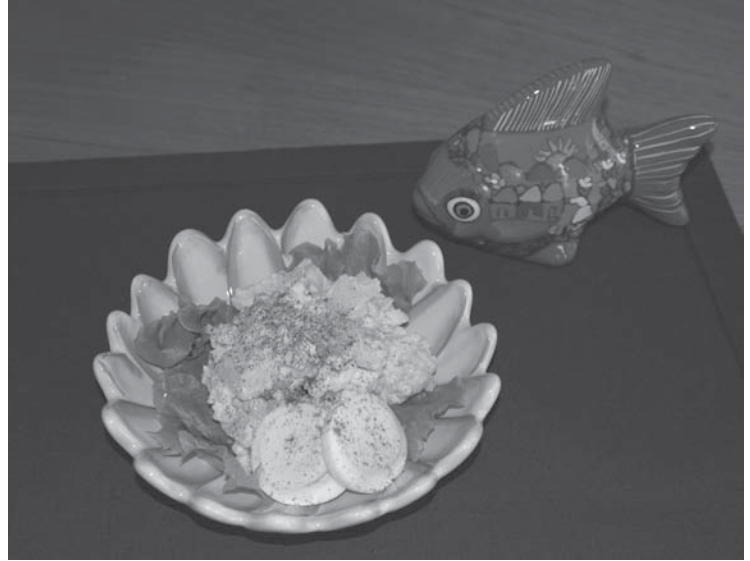


Figure 8

Potato salad gains appeal when mustard, onion, and celery seeds are incorporated.
Courtesy of Plycon Press.

CULTURAL ACCENT

PARSLEY, ITALIAN PARSLEY, OR CILANTRO?

Flavor accents that are characteristic of certain cultures may be added to salads. Examples of this are parsley, Italian parsley, and cilantro. The parsley most familiar to Americans has a curly leaf, a crisp character, and a clean, fresh flavor. Its deep green color and perky appearance have often cast it in the role of a garnish to brighten food presentations. However, other cultures have similar herbs that can be used to inject different flavor notes.

Italian parsley, as the name suggests, is a member of the parsley family, but its leaf is flat and less crisp than parsley (Figure 9). Like parsley, the leaves are clustered on short branches. The flavor of this herb appealed to early Greeks, but it was the Romans who used it so much that it became known as Italian parsley. Its slightly peppery flavor

is stronger and less bitter than that of parsley, making it a suitable ingredient in many salads.

Cilantro looks somewhat similar to Italian parsley because of its flat leaf. However, the flat leaves are on fairly long, delicate stems, reflecting that cilantro (also called coriander) is a member of the carrot family. Its heritage explains its unique flavor that is quite different from the parsley family. The flavor is somewhat elusive to describe, but such words as pungent, slightly soapy, and distinctive are applicable. The cultural background of cilantro is found in Asia and Latin America. In fact, another name for cilantro is Chinese parsley. Cilantro is featured as a key flavoring ingredient in many dishes from Mexico, other Latin American countries, and Asian cuisines.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Figure 9

Italian parsley, cilantro, and parsley (left to right) contribute individual flavor and texture to salads.

Courtesy of Plycon Press.



TYPES OF SALADS

Fruit Salads

The sweetness of fruit salads makes them an excellent choice when the salad is to serve as a dessert; they also can be used as the main course of a luncheon or as an accompaniment to the main course (Figure 10). A large, dramatic platter of fruit can be the salad for a buffet meal. Even for small family dinners, a modest array of fruits can be combined to make a very pleasing salad. By cutting into shapes that can be arranged artistically, individual fruit salads can gain considerable appeal. Any cutting should be done to enhance the appearance of the fruit and accent the natural beauty of its line. When it is cut into quite small, nondescript cubes, much of the visual appeal of the salad is lost, whereas larger, recognizable pieces are attractive and tempting.

Figure 10

The sweet blend of flavors from apples, grapes, bananas, dried cherries, celery, and pecans make a Waldorf salad a possibility to serve as an appetizer, accompaniment, or dessert, depending on the rest of the menu. Courtesy of Plycon Press.



The fruits themselves may be the source of interesting ideas for serving a fruit salad. A dessert salad of pineapple cubes, fresh strawberries, and banana slices gains real distinction when presented on a boat made from a quarter of the pineapple, resplendent with some of its green-spiked leaves. Grapefruit can be scooped out to serve as baskets for salads. A watermelon half makes an admirable salad bowl for a fruit salad at a buffet when the interior has been scooped out to make melon balls and the shell has been scalloped or cut into “V”s all around the top edge.

Hot summer days can be made pleasant when fresh fruit plates are the main menu item for the day. A scoop of cottage cheese, some fruit sherbet, a dollop of yogurt, or some cheese can be added to provide even more nutrients, particularly some calcium and (with the exception of the sherbet) protein.

Another approach to using fruits in summer meals is afforded by a frozen fruit salad. These salads usually are made with a base of whipped cream, mayonnaise, sugar, and sometimes cream cheese. Fresh or canned fruits cut into pieces are folded into this mixture and then frozen. Although some added sugar will help to blend the flavor of the whipped cream with the fruit, this is not absolutely necessary. In fact, excessive use of sugar can make a frozen fruit salad difficult to serve on a hot day, because sugar lowers the freezing point of the mixture, causing the salad to soften and even flow quickly at room temperature.

Vegetable Salads

Most vegetables can be ingredients in a salad. Some are used raw; others may be cooked and chilled. Canned vegetables are a convenience for use in salads, for they merely require chilling and draining. Fresh vegetables require more preparation time, but their bright colors and flavors and their varied textures can add appeal to a salad. Ready-to-eat mixtures of salad greens in sealed plastic bags are gaining in popularity because of their quality and convenience.

Artistry can be brought to vegetable salads when color, line, and design are combined to advantage. An important part of creating beauty in vegetable salads is the skillful cutting of vegetables to create julienne strips (Figure 11), thin slicing of fresh mushrooms in silhouettes, or creating other pleasing shapes. Tomatoes, carrots, and onions are some of the vegetables that can be cut in many ways to add interest to the design of salads.

The range of colors available in vegetables is broad: the yellow of corn, the stark white of fresh cauliflower, the bright red of tomatoes, the deep purplish-red of red cabbage, and the great variety of shades of green seen in different salad greens illustrate the tremendous impact that color can have in vegetable salads.

Some vegetable salads are good sources of nutrients and fiber but quite low in calories—for example, various types of greens salads if they have only a modest amount of dressing. Mixed greens salads made with two or three types of greens—spinach, Bibb or leaf lettuce, and iceberg lettuce—can be beautiful studies in shades of green, and they are also high in fiber and provide a useful amount of provitamin A, folacin, and some minerals. Although they have these nutritional assets, greens are primarily a source of water and provide minimal amounts of energy—properties that make them high on the list for people seeking to lose weight. In addition to the familiar greens (i.e., raw spinach, Bibb lettuce, and iceberg lettuce), others (such as romaine, Chinese cabbage, arugula, leaf lettuce, red lettuce, watercress, escarole, and endive) can also be used in making interesting salads. Many of these are useful as liners under other salads, too.

Flavor accents often are important in adding interest to vegetable salads. The bright flavor of a green onion, including pieces of its fresh green top, is one means of bringing a salad to life. Other times, a marinated vegetable, perhaps artichoke hearts or button mushrooms, can

Figure 11
Multiblade shears are efficient for cutting basil leaves into strips and orange rind and parsley into small pieces; the tool on the right is used for creating julienne strips. Courtesy of Plycon Press.

