

SALAD

Joan Kortbein, Registered Dietitian, Certified Diabetes Educator



May is National Salad Month. When I think about salads in general, I am reminded what a broad and versatile food this is. Years ago salad was only thought of as a small bowl of lettuce with your choice of Ranch, Western or 1000 Island dressing that you ate as a side dish or because you were trying to eat healthy. Thankfully, times have changed. Today a salad may still be a side dish or it may be the main entrée for your meal.

You can add whole grains, fruit, nuts, beans/lentils, chicken or fish, countless other fresh veggies and dressings that range from creamy to fruity to add to the flavor. A salad now is something that can both nourish and sustain you in your busy day.

Here are some salad tips:

Greens - you have up to 18 different salad greens to choose from now, click the link below to learn more about some of the more popular greens available.

Fruits – chopped apples, oranges, pineapple, grapes, pears, peaches and berries are the most common; you can add dried fruit but be cautious of the added sugars and sodium content; avocado is considered a fruit by some, but just be cautious of the calorie content from the heart healthy oil it contains

Grains – whole grain pastas, wild rice, quinoa, bulgur can give you some fiber and quality carbs for sustained energy; you can make any of these ahead to have ready for a quick meal

Proteins – beans/lentils (rinse if canned to reduce sodium), nuts/seeds (~2 T to control calories), tofu, grilled chicken, tuna/salmon, hard-boiled eggs

Cheese (~2T) – Feta, Blue, Parmesan, Cheddar and Swiss are most popular for salads; lower fat cottage cheese (limit ½ cup to limit sodium)

Veggies – too many to list with endless combinations for a variety of flavors and textures, don't forget to try different varieties of things like onions and peppers that add different flavors

Herbs – a little of these goes a long way for flavor; basil pairs well with tomatoes, cilantro with avocado or shrimp salads, parsley is versatile and goes well with most any salad, thyme pairs well with chicken

Miscellaneous – lemon juice, salsa, bean sprouts, croutons (look at fat content), wonton strips

Salad dressings – some can surprisingly contain a lot of sodium and added sugar so portion control is important;

have dressing in a container on the side of your salad so you can drip your fork into the dressing then stab your greens – this gives you flavor with every bite with a fraction of the portion you normally would use. Look for dressings that contain less than 2-3 grams saturated fat, are under 250 mg sodium and less than 3 grams added sugars per serving if possible.

Some new trends to look for include charred greens where you brush full leaves of Romaine (or your favorite green) with oil and grill until it is crisp – you can add some garlic for more flavor. Adding pickled fruits like watermelon to salad is another trend that can add a tangy flavor to a salad.

Strawberry Spinach Salad

Bunch fresh Spinach, washed
1 pint strawberries, quartered
½ c walnuts, chopped

Dressing:

1 c canola oil
1/3 c vinegar
1/3 c sugar
1 tsp dry mustard
1 T poppy seeds

Combine spinach, strawberries, and walnuts in serving bowl. Combine oil, sugar, vinegar, dry mustard, and poppy seeds in container and mix well (works great in a container with lid so you can shake it up). Pour dressing over spinach mixture right before serving. Makes about 8 servings, and you will not use all of the dressing. Makes about 8-10 servings. Estimated nutritional information – 140 calories, 10 grams fat (heart healthy), 35 mg sodium, 8 gm carbohydrates, 2 gm fiber, 2 gm protein.

