

SPRUCE UP
YOUR

Salad

IN TIME FOR

Summer

By Candice Graham
Salads don't have to be boring. Here are 6 savvy ways to reinvent this simple side dish.

Produce is ripe in the summertime, making it the perfect season for fresh, crisp salads. But instead of having the same leafy dish meal after meal, let your salad shine as either a hearty entree or a show stopping side. From greens-free salads to warm grilled versions, here are 6 savvy ideas that'll have you sprucing up your salads all summer long.

Grill it.

Salads are traditionally cool and crisp, but in the summertime when cookouts are in full force, why not throw them on the grill too? Try a grilled romaine salad. Just coat the romaine with olive oil, then grill leaves on all sides until browned or softened (about 4-5 minutes). Throw in coarsely chopped tomatoes and onions and drizzle with vinaigrette for a summer salad like never before.



Toss in fruit.

Fruit salads are typically sweet, but you can incorporate fruits like watermelon to make a savory salad dish as well. Refreshing and hydrating, a watermelon cucumber salad is a perfect side dish for hot summer days. Mix in fresh basil and feta cheese, plus olive oil and lime juice, for a fresh, filling fruit-and-veggie mix.

Go greens-free.

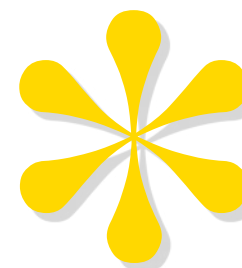
Just because it's a salad doesn't mean it has to have lettuce. Make an heirloom tomato salad – just slice tomatoes and add herbs like garlic and basil. Sprinkle on salt and pepper and add your favorite dressing for a simple, seasonal salad bursting with color and flavor.

Create a crunch.

Want some crisp and crunch? Try fresh broccoli and cauliflower, which contain fiber and vitamin C. Sprinkling in walnuts, pine nuts, or almonds will also add a crunch, plus essential minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants.

Make it a main course.

Kick your favorite salad up a notch and make it a main course by adding protein like shrimp, chicken, sliced steak, or tofu. Not a meat lover? Cheese is another great way to add some protein. Try blue cheese, feta, or goat cheese for a punch of flavor and a savory taste.



Bring down the calorie count.

Don't be fooled – salads can contain just as much, if not more calories than meaty sandwiches or hefty pasta dishes. Be smart about what you choose to mix into your salad dishes. To start off, don't use high-fat dressings like ranch or blue cheese. Instead, try a vinaigrette or low-fat ginger. Next, make sure to steer clear of salads in deep-fried shells or those topped with breaded chicken. Finally, choose nutrient-rich dark colored greens and forego add-ons like bacon bits and croutons which can boost calorie count.

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