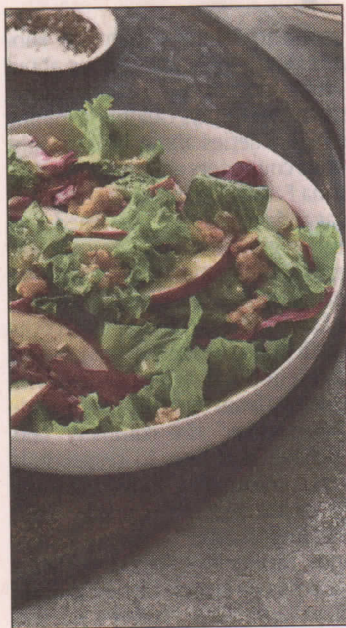


A 'winter salad' doesn't need to sacrifice flavors



By Ellen Silverman, Cooking Light

Comfort food: Use seasonal vegetables and fruits for flavor.

Winter will be here officially next week, so now is the time you'll want to dig into heavier comfort foods. But don't let this change make you phase out the nutrition found in light, summery salads.

Your Life nutrition blogger Dawn Jackson Blatner offers an easy formula to winterize your salads. Start with a base of arugula, baby spinach or mixed greens. Then choose from any or all of the following five categories for a satisfying dish:

1 Raw winter veggies and greens.

Add any of the following hearty and seasonal chopped vegetables. Veggies picked at their peak are the most tasty and may be more nutritious than buying out of season.

- ▶ broccoli
- ▶ cauliflower
- ▶ fennel
- ▶ endive
- ▶ radicchio
- ▶ collard greens
- ▶ swiss chard
- ▶ cabbage

2 Sweet winter fruits.

No salad can be complete without a little sweetness, so add any of the following chopped fresh or dried seasonal fruit. Both provide valuable vitamins, minerals and fiber. Dried fruit has more concentrated calories, so be moderate using it.

- ▶ apples
- ▶ pears
- ▶ grapes
- ▶ oranges, clementines, tangerines, grapefruit
- ▶ pomegranate seeds
- ▶ dried cranberries
- ▶ dates

3 Hearty grains and legumes.

To help a salad "stick to your ribs," toss it with any of the following (warm or room temperature) cooked grains or legumes. It's easy to prepare grains: Hearty grains such as farro, wheatberries, barley and kasha can be made pasta-style. Just fill a big pot with water and bring to a boil; add grain and reduce to a simmer until tender, which could take 30-60 minutes, depending on quantity. Quinoa and bulgur are time-savers and cook more quickly than the rest — usually in 10 minutes.

- ▶ brown rice
- ▶ barley
- ▶ kasha
- ▶ bulgur
- ▶ quinoa
- ▶ wheatberries
- ▶ farro
- ▶ beans: white, black, kidney, etc.
- ▶ lentils

4 Roasted roots and friends.

Roasting brings out a naturally deep flavor. Add any of the following (warm or room temperature) roasted vegetables. To roast vegetables: Preheat oven to 400 degrees F; put bite-sized vegetables on a parchment-lined baking sheet for easy clean up, and mist with cooking spray. Roast for 25 minutes, flip and check every 10 minutes until the veggies are tender and lightly brown around the edges.

- ▶ sweet or white potatoes
- ▶ carrots
- ▶ turnips
- ▶ parsnips
- ▶ beets
- ▶ brussels sprouts
- ▶ winter squash, such as butternut or acorn

5 Seasonal dressing.

Choose dressings that highlight seasonal superstar flavors such as grapefruit, ginger and apple cider.

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Find 3 salad dressing recipes and read more of Dawn's blog at food.usatoday.com.