

September 2010

Dear Clients and Friends:

Summer's the time for a great salad. Now, there are two kinds of salads. One is the light version, some iceberg lettuce with tomatoes and cucumber, plus a dressing. This is what many restaurants serve on the side with your entrée. I feel like saying in my best Australian accent, "you call that a salad?"

To put together a salad that really means something, a salad for company or to satisfy your own craving for something big and green, this is how you do it. First of all, buy yourself a salad spinner, because the lettuce has to be dry. I like the OXO clear plastic spinner for \$24.88 on Amazon.com. But if you're lazy like me, only use this for washing fresh romaine lettuce. Spoil yourself by spending five bucks for one of those big plastic boxes of spring mix baby lettuce.

The Wild Harvest organic mix, which I get at Albertson's, lasts over a week in perfect condition and it's already washed. You're going to mix romaine with the baby lettuce in a big bowl, then add any or all of the following: bell pepper, cherry tomatoes, olives, green onion, baby corn, artichoke hearts, garbanzo beans, baby carrots, any other veggie, pine nuts you've toasted under the broiler, golden raisins and crumbled goat cheese.

Yeah boy. Now for a dressing better than anything you can buy in the store. Take a jar with a screw top and pour in some extra virgin olive oil. Carapelli makes one that says "for flavoring and dipping bread." I'm not giving any amounts because you're going to adjust for taste anyway. Just pour some in. Add raspberry vinegar, not a lot, and balsamic vinegar, not a lot, plus the juice from at least half a lemon. Sweeten with orange honey, and throw in part of a package of Good Season's or any other dry Italian salad dressing mix (start with a small amount, then test). Finally, add fresh garlic, but once the garlic is in and if you're serving to company, don't let it sit more than a minute before shaking well and pouring over the greens. You won't hear any complaints.

Chef Charles