

# Salad Lovers' SALADS

Signature Dishes from the  
Garden or Farmers' Market

by Judith Fertig

Going green—at least on our plates—has never been easier. Every season, it seems that more varieties of fresh greens are available at farmers' markets and in selections of nursery plants or seeds for home gardeners. Not so long ago, Americans generally thought of salad as pale iceberg lettuce with high-fat bottled dressing or some mixture of veggies, bound together with mayonnaise. These days, we can choose from among a bounty of tender lettuces and exotic greens, topped with extra virgin olive oils and splashed with colorful creative counterpoints that add zest and yum.

Salads today provide a culinary canvas for both the cook and the gardener. A signature salad generally comprises several key ingredients: cool, crisp, fresh and nutritious greens; a fresh-tasting, low-calorie dressing; and bite-size fruits, nuts, vegetables or cheeses that add flavor, texture and interest.

For the greens, tender leaf or Bibb lettuce, crisp Romaine or cabbage, sliced or finely chopped, make the best-tasting salads. For the best-tasting dressings, cooks whisk ingredients together in a bowl minutes before serving. We can drizzle them over each salad, serve them in a small pitcher on the side or place the salad in a large bowl, and then toss to incorporate the dressing. Added accents have expanded to include everything from soft fruits such as strawberries and oranges; savory and salty crumbled feta or blue cheeses; or something crunchy, like toasted almonds or walnuts, in addition to ubiquitous garden-fresh vegetables, such as scallions or tomatoes. Adding a healthy hot or cold protein makes a salad even more of a main course. Altogether, in ever-evolving combinations, today's wide-ranging healthful ingredients can work edible magic.

Judith Fertig is a freelance writer in Overland Park, KS; see [AlfrescoFoodAndLifestyle.blogspot.com](http://AlfrescoFoodAndLifestyle.blogspot.com).



## Nitty Gritty Dirt Farm's Slaw

When Minnesota's Nitty Gritty Dirt Farm employees gather for a summer lunch, this crunchy cabbage-based slaw often graces their table.

Serves 6

### Slaw

*1/2 lb Napa cabbage, cored*

*1/2 lb green cabbage, cored*

*1 bunch red radishes (about 12 medium to large), trimmed*

*1/2 lb broccoli, florets separated from stalks*

*1/2 bunch green onions, pale and green parts, sliced 1/4-inch thick*

*1/2 lb green beans, ends trimmed, sliced 1/4-inch thick*

### Dressing

*1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil*

*2-1/2 Tbsp cider vinegar or more to taste*

*1 Tbsp honey*

*1/4 tsp ground ginger*

*Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper*

1. Chop cabbages, radishes and broccoli florets into very small pieces. With a knife or vegetable peeler, pare the tough outer layer of the broccoli stalks to reveal the pale core. Chop the cores the same size as the other vegetables.

2. Put all the chopped vegetables in a large bowl and add the green onions and green beans. Toss to mix.

3. For the dressing, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, honey, ginger, and salt and pepper in a bowl, according to

taste. Add the dressing to the slaw, using just enough to coat the vegetables nicely. Toss well. Let rest at room temperature for about an hour before serving, or cover and refrigerate. The slaw will remain crunchy for at least eight hours.

*Source: Adapted from Eating Local: The Cookbook Inspired by America's Farmers, by Sur La Table and Janet Fletcher (AndrewsMcMeel.com).*

## Strawberry and Feta Salad with Honey-Yogurt Dressing

Gardening blogger Barbara Pleasant counts this as her favorite salad, one that changes with the season. In the spring, strawberries go well with feta. In the fall, pears pair with blue cheese.

Serves 2

### Honey-Yogurt Dressing

*2 Tbsp plain yogurt  
2 Tbsp mayonnaise or veggie mayo  
1 tsp honey  
1 tsp rice vinegar  
Salt and pepper to taste*

### Salad

*2 cups fresh salad greens  
1 cup fresh sliced strawberries  
½ cup crumbled feta cheese  
¼ cup chopped, toasted almonds or walnuts*

1. For the dressing, mix the yogurt, mayo, honey and rice vinegar together in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

2. Arrange the greens on two salad plates and top with strawberries and feta. Drizzle with the dressing, sprinkle with chopped nuts and serve.

*Award-winning garden writer Barbara Pleasant blogs about growing and eating organic food at [BarbaraPleasant.com](http://BarbaraPleasant.com).*



# Salad Lovers' GARDEN TIPS

by Barbara Pleasant

If you really love salad, you owe it to yourself to try growing your own garden-fresh ingredients. Lettuce is fast and easy to grow, with beautiful colors and textures worthy of a flower garden. Most salad staples grow best in cool weather; so don't wait for summer to get started. Here are eight tips for a successful salad garden season.

**Make several small sowings.** Lettuce and other salad greens grow quickly and must be picked before they get too old, so try planting about two square feet of space every three weeks, starting in early spring. Take a break during summer's heat, and then plant more salad greens when the weather cools in late summer. In tropical areas, grow lettuce as a winter crop.

**Try Bibbs, butterheads and other beauties.** Seed racks offer packets of tempting varieties, and all except iceberg types are easy to grow in a garden. Buttercrunch and other Bibb varieties always do well, as do butterheads and leaf lettuces. Choose a mixture of varieties or buy three packets with different leaf colors and textures.

**Mark boundaries with radishes or scallions.** Plant fast-sprouting radish seed or green onions from the store to mark the locations of newly sown seeds. The onions will quickly grow new roots and tops; simply pull them as needed in the kitchen.

**Mix in some spinach.** Boost the nutrient content of salads by including spinach in the salad garden. Spinach grows best in rich, fertile soil.



**Add water.** All leafy greens crave water, and dry conditions can cause lettuce to become bitter. Keep a watering can near the salad bed and water as often as needed to keep the soil constantly moist, but not muddy.

**Eat thinnings.** Lettuce seedlings often appear close together, and a good gardener will pull out excess seedlings to give the plants room to grow. After thinning seedlings to two inches apart, start eating the pulled plants as baby greens.

**Pick in the morning.** Lettuce and other leafy greens are at their best in the morning, after they have had all night to recover from the stresses of the previous day. If it's not possible to gather greens in the morning, pop a cardboard box over the bed for the day. Protected from hot sun, a salad patch can keep its morning freshness until evening.

**Grow more when temperatures cool.** Salad crops struggle in hot weather, but often thrive in cooler months. In the north, gardeners can use leftover seeds to start up a second delicious salad season in late summer; in the south, they can get an early start on the long winter growing season as soon as summer temperatures abate.

*Barbara Pleasant is the author of numerous gardening books, including Starter Vegetable Gardens: 24 No-Fail Plans for Small Organic Gardens. Visit [BarbaraPleasant.com](http://BarbaraPleasant.com).*

## Simple, Super-Fast Citrus Salad

When horticulture author Barbara Pleasant's garden is at its peak, she doesn't like to slow down. She goes from garden to table in minutes, remarking, "I love this simple and super-fast salad."

Serves 2

### Citrus Vinaigrette Dressing

*2 Tbsp sesame oil*

*2 Tbsp orange juice*

*Salt and pepper to taste*

### Salad

*2 cups fresh salad greens*

*1 cup fresh orange, peeled and chopped, or canned mandarin oranges, rinsed and drained*

*½ cup chopped green onions, including some of the green*

1. For the vinaigrette, whisk the sesame oil and orange juice together in a bowl. Season to taste.

2. Arrange the greens on two salad plates and top with orange and scallion. Drizzle with vinaigrette and serve.

*Award-winning garden writer Barbara Pleasant blogs about growing and eating organic food at [BarbaraPleasant.com](http://BarbaraPleasant.com).*



## Spinach and Avocado Salad

This fresh-tasting salad features a variety of colors, flavors and textures.

Serves 4

*1 large ripe avocado, diced*

*1 Tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice*

*4 cups baby spinach leaves*

*½ cup chopped green onions*

*1 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in halves*

*1 cup sliced radishes*

*½ cup bottled low-calorie Italian vinaigrette*

1. In a small bowl, coat avocado with lime juice. Set aside.

2. In a large bowl, toss together spinach, green onions, tomatoes, radishes and vinaigrette. Divide evenly onto four plates. Top with avocado pieces.

*Source: Adapted from 350 Best Salads & Dressings by George Geary © 2010 Robert Rose Inc. (RobertRose.ca). Excerpted with permission; all rights reserved.*