

# Food for Thought

July 2025

## Summer Salad Tips

Salads can provide a nutritious and refreshing meal when it is just too hot to cook. With the amount of fresh produce available at this time of year, there are almost endless nutritious salad combinations to try. Some tips to build the ultimate summer salad add:



- **Greens** – Get creative with your greens! Go beyond the traditional spinach and romaine. Try kale, arugula, escarole or Swiss chard. Or for a completely different base, try making spirals or strips of zucchini.
- **Extra veggies** – Add in as many additional veggies as you like. Veggies like tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and others are packed full of vitamins and minerals and add flavor and crunch to your salad.
- **Protein** – Pick a protein or two! If you are vegetarian, or even if you're not, try tofu, beans or soybeans on your salad for a change. Choose lean proteins like chicken, fish or hard cooked eggs. Added protein will help you stay fuller longer.
- **Healthy Fats** – Try avocado, sunflower seeds, walnuts or almonds as an interesting topping. If you are a cheese-lover, add a portion of your low-fat favorite into the mix. Remember, a serving of cheese is 1.5 ounces or about the size of four dice.
- **Fun mix-ins for texture and flavor** – Add in other items for texture and flavor. Try something sweet like sliced apple, mango chunks, strawberries or any dried fruit. If you want a little crunch, add tortilla chips or croutons. Another option to make it a heartier salad would be to add some grains; brown rice, quinoa or couscous all work well in a salad. Grains can round out the salad, making this meal contain all 5 food groups.
- **Dress it up!** – With 1-2 tablespoons of low-fat dressing. For more control over sodium and calories you can make your own dressing. A simple vinaigrette is a 3:1 ratio of oil to vinegar. For extra flavors choose a flavored vinegar with garlic and oil. For extra sweetness add a bit of honey. Then just shake it up after you add your favorite herbs, chilies, salt and/or pepper. Throw everything in a bowl, toss it together, and you have a quick-and-easy, no-cook meal. A small amount of salad dressing will go a long way and keep the fat and sodium down in your salad. Try adding a tablespoon at a time and tossing it well to evenly distribute the dressing.
- **Focus on MyPlate** – Try to include all 5 food groups from MyPlate in your salad. Include whole grains, vegetables, fruit, dairy, and protein to fill your plate. Doing this is a great way to get a serving from each food group.



## Summer Salad Ideas

All of these single serving salads can be topped with your favorite bottled dressing or homemade dressing.

**The Southwest:** 1-2 cups Mixed green salad, 1/4 cup diced bell peppers, 1/2 cup black beans (rinsed), 1/4 cup chopped tomatoes, 1/4 cup pepper jack cheese 2-3 Tablespoons dressing, tortilla chips.

**The Summer:** 1-2 cups Mixed green salad, 1/2 cup sliced strawberries, 1/4 cup diced cucumbers, 2-4 Tablespoons goat cheese, 2 Tablespoons almonds, 2-3 Tablespoons dressing.

**The Classic:** 1-2 cups Mixed green salad, 1/4 cup shredded carrots, 1/4 cup broccoli, 1/4 cup chopped tomatoes, 2-4 Tablespoon cheddar cheese, 2 Tablespoon croutons, 1 boiled egg, 2-3 Tablespoon dressing.

**\*Warm Salad:** 1-2 cups Mixed green salad, 1/2 cup cubed baked sweet potato, 1/4 cup baked beets, 1/4-1/2 cup baked chickpeas, 2-4 Tablespoons feta, 2-3 Tablespoons dressing.

\*Note: Prepping Warm Salad

1. Preheat your oven to 420°F.
2. Wash hands with warm water and soap
3. Rub vegetables under cool water and rinse can of chickpeas.
4. Dice sweet potato and beet into small pieces.
5. Add potato, beet, and chickpeas to a shallow pan.
6. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil and salt and pepper to taste. Give a quick toss to make sure all is coated.
7. Bake for 30 minutes (or until fork tender), flipping the veggies halfway.



Sources: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/keep\\_it\\_cool\\_with\\_summer\\_salads](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/keep_it_cool_with_summer_salads); [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/ten\\_tips\\_for\\_summer\\_salads](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/ten_tips_for_summer_salads); <https://eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/blog/5-ingredient-series-salad> retrieved 07/02/25

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To contact the Eat Smart Idaho Coordinator: Kali Gardiner, RD, LD [www.eatsmartidaho.org](http://www.eatsmartidaho.org)  
Phone: 208-292-2525 E-mail – [kalig@uidaho.edu](mailto:kalig@uidaho.edu)