



Misty's View on Dressing your Summer Greens

We begin this glorious season armed with recipes that were reluctantly shelved for nine months, and think that the novelty of their reappearance alone will take us well into the summer season. Yet as we prepare for our fifth barbecue we soon realize that what we thought was new is now suddenly old...and we have many months to go before the snow!

Interesting salads are the key to keeping familiar grilled meats, fish and vegetables enticing until the first autumn leaves appear. It is vital to create and serve inspired side dishes that will make the same barbecue items seem new.

Purchase and **experiment with a vast**

range of lettuces during this alfresco season. Some lettuces bring such intense character to your dinner that they alone can make the difference. The exotic and peppery flavour of baby arugula, for example, when paired with aged Balsamic vinaigrette is the perfect marriage of flavour integrity.

Learn how to create a simple temporary emulsion that marries excellent vinegars with excellent oils. If you'd like help, see my instructions on this page.

With this technique mastered, **experiment with different oils**, such as hazelnut, walnut, and top-of-the-line olive oils. Also **give a variety of vinegars a try**: Xeres sherry vinegar, aged cider vinegar, raspberry, white Balsamic, and citrus juices provide the necessary acids to make your oil choices a new invention when blended together.

Don't forget that salads can be composed of things other than lettuces. Apart from the classic potato salad, there are many starch-based salads that can compete with the meat. Here are some ideas:

- ◆ A **toasted barley salad** with finely diced cooked carrots, onions and fresh herbs dressed in a light emulsion, for ex-

ample, can make the ultimate complement for simple grilled chicken or lamb chops.

- ◆ Yesterday's **rice pilaf or roasted root vegetables** can be reincarnated into tonight's feature salad simply by heating them up slightly, adding some fresh, crunchy veggies and herbs, then dressing them with a touch of compatible salad dressing.
- ◆ Last night's **corn on the cob** too is the perfect garnish for a simple mixed green salad topped with diced tomatoes and Tex Mex dressing. Corn can be reborn!

Green veggies like asparagus, green beans and broccoli turn an unattractive military green when in contact with an acid, so dressing them with an acid-based dressing will shortly turn them from a brilliant green to a mess-hall mess. Cooking these same vegetables with a lid on creates the same effect, since the natural acid in them has nowhere to go but back into the veggies. Lesson: **dress green veggies at the last minute** if you want them to stay green!

Invest in your barbecue items, but bolster them for the long season by creating the side-kicks that will keep your outdoor meals intriguing.

How to Create an Emulsion



A rich assortment of ingredients for dressings in a caddy made by Misty's son Barret Sharpe.

sion when carefully combined with oil. Using a ratio rather than a measuring method will free you from following specific recipes and will allow you to do the experimenting I encourage you to do.

A common rule of thumb is a three-to-one ratio of oil to acid, but once you get the hang of it you can slide this ratio up and down the flavour scale according to your taste. Do you like a tangy dressing or a more subtle one? Then up the acid and down the oil. If the oil you are using is really rich, like a dark green virgin olive oil, then perhaps you might either challenge the flavour with your acid or let the oil become the prominent note in your dressing.

Another important factor to the stability of an emulsion is the speed at which oil is introduced into your acids. If you flood your vinegar with too much oil then the marriage will never happen. And never, ever, ever, start the two together and try to blend them, since they will spin around and then fall back apart within minutes!

Don't forget to **add some important flavouring accents** into your acid foundation. Garlic, ginger, green onions, should be added at the beginning, along with supporting ingredients like mustard, or egg yolks that will stabilize your dressing and make it seem creamy.

And it's a myth that creamy dressings have cream in them. They just look like it! A few classic American dressings like ranch, blue cheese and green goddess use dairy such as sour cream or buttermilk instead of oil.

What's an emulsion anyway? If you're a cook, it simply means **a union between oil and vinegar** that creates a new, glossy texture which seems less oily, somehow, and carries more flavour in its suspension.

Acids, which are vinegars or citrus juices, **create a temporary emul-**