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Salad – On a Diet

Cool, light and tasty are words that come to mind when thinking of salads. Salads can offer a low fat, low calorie meal for those looking for a light lunch or dinner. However, a salad can quickly become a fat-laden, calorie-heavy choice if the right selections aren't made when creating your favorite salad.

With vegetables at their core, salads are great sources of vitamin C, and the leafiest among them supply plenty of that “foliage” vitamin, folate. The most colorful combinations—spiked with tomatoes, carrots, cabbages or bell peppers—also deliver vitamin A (as beta carotene), lycopene and other key phytonutrients.

- Start with a base of any darker colored greens, such as romaine or spinach. The darker the lettuce, the more nutrients it has.
- Next add veggies, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, mushrooms, peppers, onions, carrots and beets. Most veggies have fiber, which doesn't add calories or fat, but helps you feel full longer because of the sponge-like effect of fiber. Try to choose a rainbow of colors for your salad.
- For protein, add kidney, pinto or garbanzo beans. Beans add both flavor and fiber. Grilled chicken, ham or plain tuna (no mayonnaise) is also a good choice to add some protein without adding extra fat. Cheese and eggs also add protein to a salad, but limit the amount you use as they can also raise the fat and calorie content.
- For added crunch, sunflower seeds can add protein, fiber and healthy fat, but enjoy in moderation to keep the fat and calorie content lower. Look for low-fat croutons, chopped pretzels as another crunchy additions.



Salad dressing is a must for most people. It enhances flavor. Using low-fat or fat-free versions can keep your salad low in calories. Some dressings raise the fat and calorie content of a salad close to the equivalent of eating a cheeseburger and fries. This is a hidden trap many of us fall into while enjoying a salad. As an alternative, place your dressing on the side and dip your fork in the dressing before each bite. [See the recipe on the back of this handout for a delicious low-fat dressing recipe.](#)

Basic Fat-Free Vinaigrette Yield: 10 oz. (1 ½ cups)

1 large onion, whole peeled

2 Tbsp. Prepared mustard (French or Dijon-style)

2 Tbsp. Wine Vinegar

½ cup Vegetable stock or juice

2 Tbsp. Chopped Parsley

Salt – to taste

Pepper, to taste

1. Roast the onions at 350°F (175°C) until they are completely soft, about 45 to 60 minutes
2. Cool until they are cool enough to handle. Peel.
3. Purée the onions in a blender or food processor.
4. Add the mustard and stock. Blend to mix well.
5. Stir in the chopped parsley.
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper or other spices or herbs.

Basic Salad Ideas (makes 2 servings)

6 cups baby spinach, romaine, or chopped head lettuce

4 tablespoons low-fat dressing

4 hard-boiled eggs

1 can sliced or diced beets, black beans, or water chestnut (or combination) – drained and rinsed

1 cup carrots or cabbage, shredded

2 tablespoons chopped nuts of your choice

1. Toss greens with 2 tablespoons low-fat dressing in a large bowl.
2. Divide between 2 plates.
3. Top with chopped eggs, drained beans or vegies, carrots and nuts.
4. Drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons dressing.

Nutrition Info (per serving): 300 calories; 13 g fat; 216 mg cholesterol; 26 g carbohydrates; 22 g protein; 8 g fiber; 823 mg sodium; 592 mg potassium.

