

You Feta You Feta You Bet

By John Rizzo

With fall quickly approaching, most of our gardens are abundant with red ripe tomatoes. Blended with a few seasonings, olive oil and balsamic vinegar, you have the start of a refreshing summer salad. But take it one step further with the addition of feta cheese and a few more vegetables; and now you have something real special.

You may not know it but, feta cheese dates back thousands of years. It was referenced in “The Odyssey” by Homer which was written in the eighth century BC. Traditionally Greek, it was made with either goat’s or sheep’s milk. Even today, it is made with unpasteurized goat and or sheep’s milk in the mountains of Greece. The goats and sheep roam freely throughout the region and the flavor of their milk can vary depending upon what they feed on. As a result, in Europe, feta is branded with the region it is grown and each region’s cheese will have it’s own distinct flavor. Now if you’re a little queasy about eating unpasteurized goat milk, you may be interested to know that most domestic feta cheese is made with pasteurized cow’s milk.

After separating the curdled milk, the solids are formed into blocks and sliced; hence the word feta which translates to “slice” in Italian. The slices are salted and packed in barrels filled with whey or brine. The cheese continues to cure in the brine anywhere from a week to several months. It is important to store unused feta in its brine for once it’s removed it will immediately begin to dry out.

Greek Tomato Salad

Yield: 6

Lettuce blend	6 Cups	Kalamata Olives	1/2 Cup
Tomatoes, Sliced 1/4 in.	12 slices	Olive Oil	1/2 Cup
Cucumbers, Sliced 1/4 in.	12 slices	Black Pepper	1 tsp.
Roasted Red Peppers Strips	3/4 Cup	Balsamic Vin.	1/4 Cup
Sweet Onion, Sliced thin	1/2 Cup	Oregano Leaves	1 TBL
Feta Cheese,	1/2 Cup	Sugar	2 tsp.

Whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, oregano leaves, black pepper, and sugar; set aside.

Put the lettuce blend (your choice of iceberg, romaine, bib, leaf, etc.) in a separate bowl. Pour 1/2 the dressing (about 1/3 cup) over the lettuce and mix well. If using iceberg, do this approximately 2 hours before serving. This gives the lettuce an opportunity to soften and absorb the flavor.

In your serving bowl, arrange the lettuce mix along the bottom. Alternate tomato and cucumber slices in a circle around



the perimeter of the bowl. Spread a layer of roasted red peppers on the inside of the tomatoes and cucumbers, slightly overlapping. Arrange the onions in the same manner overlapping the peppers. Next, arrange the olives leaving a space in the center for the feta cheese. Drizzle the remaining dressing over the tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and onions; serve in chilled salad bowls.