

1905 Salad

What's so hard about making a wine country green salad? Start with a little pile of red leaf lettuce and spinach leaves, throw on a few tangerine wedges and an onion ring, sprinkle with some crushed walnuts, douse with bottled balsamic vinaigrette and serve. Blah, Blah, Blah. Let's talk about a REAL salad with your own scratch made dressing--voted one of America's ten best salads. When traveling through Florida, I always stop at the Columbia restaurant in St. Augustine. They bring a big tray of ingredients in little bowls and sauce cups to your table and make this amazing salad and dressing while you watch. It's quite a show, and eating it is a true dining experience. Way better than a little plate of mostly dry greens and nuts that I have to shovel onto my fork with my fingers. When I have luncheon guests at the ranch, I usually serve this "1905" salad and my Simple Roasted Tomato Soup. It's easy to eat with a fork, flavorful, and filling. Why is it called "1905?" No one actually knows. A waiter at the Columbia restaurant, Tony Noriega, created the original recipe in the 1940's. Thirty years later, the restaurant staff, seeking an alternative to the ubiquitous Florida salad bar, made a few changes to the recipe and started serving it to every customer. The CEO of Lea & Perrins heard about this salad made with Worcestershire sauce and made a special trip to Florida just to taste it.

Ingredients

1/2 head iceberg lettuce (chopped into 1-inch squares)
1 ripe tomato, cut into eighths
1/2 cup Swiss cheese, cut julienne (4 ounces)
1/2 cup ham, cut julienne (4 ounces)
1/2 cup green Spanish olives
2 TBS white wine vinegar
1/2 cup Lodi Olive Oil
4 garlic cloves, cut fine brunoise
1 tsp oregano
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper
2 tsp Opal's Reserve Worcestershire sauce
1 lemon, squeezed for juice (about 2 TBS)
1/4 cup grated Romano cheese



Assembling the Salad

Toss the lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, ham, and olives together in a large bowl.

Making the Dressing

Mix the olive oil, garlic, and oregano in a 2-quart bowl with a wire whisk. Gradually, stir in vinegar, whisking continuously to form an emulsion. Season with salt and pepper and whisk.

Finishing the Salad

Add the Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice to the dressing and whisk until blended. Add the Romano cheese and dressing to the salad mix and toss until all the lettuce is coated with dressing.

Presentation

I like to make everything in front of my guests. It goes pretty quick. I assemble the salad in a big glass bowl, about twice the size of the salad, so they can see all the ingredients being mixed. In a smaller 2-quart glass bowl, I whisk all the dressing ingredients then finish with Worcestershire and lemon juice. I pour the dressing on the salad, toss, add the Romano cheese, and toss again. This recipe makes four *large* side salads or provides a full meal for two (or three).



Ingredients, bowls, and gadgets laid out for my “1905 salad making show”

The California Ingredient

Though most of the olive oil consumed in the US comes from Europe, California olive oil has risen from 2% of the US market share in 2012 to 6% in 2016. Lodi is an emerging center of high quality olive oil production. Calivirgin, Corto, and Olive Drop now produce premium award-winning extra-virgin olive oil in local, state-of-the-art olive mills for bulk, restaurant, and retail sales. During your wine tour of Lodi, you can visit the Coldani Olive Ranch on Thornton Road and taste new and traditional Calivirgin and Lodi Olive Oil Company flavors and blends fresh from their barrels. My favorite, Lodi Olive Oil Company's Ascolano, has a fruity aroma, reminiscent of tropical fruit and peaches, with a medium intensity and mild pepper finish. I use it for any preparation where my guests will taste the oil directly. My high school classmate, Katie (Cortopassi) Whitlow and her husband, Brady, run Corto Olive Company, which grows olives down the street from our house and produces tasty extra virgin olive oil at a mill around the corner on Live Oak Road. I use Corto for almost all my cooking needs.

Tips and Tricks

If you want to have everything ready when your guests arrive, you can do “Assembling the Salad” and “Making the Dressing” the morning of your party and refrigerate until serving. If you refrigerate the dressing, the olive oil will thicken and turn milky white. Just remove it from the refrigerator about a half-hour before serving, and it will return to normal. Have a whisk handy to re-emulsify the oil. Immediately before serving, finish the salad by adding the Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice to the dressing and the Romano cheese to the salad.

If you get a particularly large tomato, rather than cut it into eighths, cut it into quarters, then slice each quarter lengthwise and cut each of the eighths into three pieces. You want bite-sized tomato chunks.

To get cool crispy lettuce every time, I always use a salad spinner (page 195).