

Seasonal Eating
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Spring Lettuces Usher In Lighter Mealt
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Last week our regional Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agents toured the Tanimura and Antle hydroponic greenhouses in Livingston, Tennessee where they grow butterhead lettuce. It was fascinating to see all of those beautiful heads of lettuce developing from a seed to the clamshell package ready for the grocery store. I am thankful for this type of agriculture that provides clean, tasty, nutritious produce year round.



While lettuce is available all year round at the stores, I think of those beautiful, tender leaf lettuces, spinach and butterhead lettuce in the spring. We transition from the heavier, heartier meat and potatoes meals to lighter, fresher meals for the summer. A salad of tender, fresh, vibrant lettuce with delicious toppings that are sweet, peppery, tangy and crunchy is the perfect dish for a side to a steak or for a main dish light supper.

My formula for a salad usually includes:

Lettuce - some mixture of greens like spinach, leaf lettuce, bibb lettuce, romaine, arugula or radicchio

Peppery - red onion, spring onions, green onion, sweet onions, radishes

Fruit or Vegetables - for a sweeter salad I might use strawberries, grapes, oranges, apples or pears - if more savory then I might use celery, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, roasted beets, roasted sweet potatoes, etc.

Cheese - I usually include some type of cheese in my salads like blue cheese, feta, Parmesan or goat cheese for an added tangy/salty interest

Nuts - I love to use nuts for some texture and crunch, either toasted or sugared

Sometimes I include croutons or bacon, chicken, steak or boiled egg, depending on the type of salad and whether it is a main dish or a side salad or a ladies luncheon salad.

The salad I made with our sample of butterhead lettuce from the tour was topped with grapes for sweetness, celery, green onions, blue cheese and almonds for crunch all bathed in a balsamic vinaigrette. Find your favorite combinations and enjoy a refreshing spring salad.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Spring Lettuce Grape Salad

1 head butterhead, romaine or a mix of lettuces

Balsamic vinaigrette dressing (about 1/2 cup)

1 cup halved green seedless grapes

1/2 cup sliced celery

2 green onions, sliced

1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese

1/2 cup toasted sliced almonds

Wash and dry lettuce well. Tear into bite sized pieces into a large bowl. Toss with dressing to taste. Divide onto four plates. Top each with 1/4 of the grapes, celery, onion, blue cheese and almonds. Drizzle with a little more dressing over the top.