

Seasonal Eating
Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Winter Salads Brighten Up January Dinners
January 2021

We don't usually think of salads in the winter but they are a refreshing break from the heavier foods of the holidays. They also can be made from hearty ingredients that stand up to the season of winter.

Let's start with the base. Instead of a tender spring mix or butter lettuce, winter salads start with hearty greens like baby kale, collards, spinach, arugula, radicchio, cabbage, fennel or Brussels sprouts. For kale and collards, try slicing thin ribbons and then dress with an acidic vinaigrette, massaging it with your hands for a few minutes to help break down the tougher fibers (baby kale is more tender and doesn't need this treatment). Radicchio is common in Italian dishes and is a member of the chicory family. It is usually red with white veins and has a bitter taste which is great when mixed with sweeter greens, fruits and a slightly sweet dressing. Cabbage and fennel add a great crunchiness to winter salads and are good when mixed with other softer greens like spinach. Fennel especially pairs well with citrus fruits, like mandarin oranges. Brussels sprouts can be shaved into thin shreds or the leaves can be peeled off in layers for a green base.



Winter salads call for heartier ingredients to add in to the greens. Roasted acorn or butternut squash slices or cubes add a sweet and filling note to winter salads. Sprinkle with a little olive oil salt, pepper and whatever seasoning you like (cinnamon, maple syrup, balsamic vinegar, etc.) and roast until tender. Roasted beets, cauliflower or sweet potato cubes are also a good addition for a heartier salad. Beans and chickpeas can be tossed into winter greens or you can add some cooked grains like farro, barley or wild rice to make filling, satisfying salads. You can even add pasta like ramen noodles.

When making winter salads, think of winter flavors like apple cider, citrus, Dijon, curry or maple dressings. Add in dried fruits, toasted nuts, cooked bacon, apple or pear slices or radishes. Cheeses like gorgonzola, goat cheese or feta provide a pop of strong flavor to match the heartier ingredients.

So roast up some vegetables or cook up some beans or grains and make a hearty winter salad for lunch or dinner.

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

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

Maple Acorn Squash Salad

- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon maple extract

1 cup pecan halves
1 acorn squash
Olive oil
Pinch kosher salt and sprinkle of black pepper
1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
3 tablespoons maple syrup
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 cup thinly sliced radicchio
2 1/2 ounces baby kale, roughly chopped
2 ribs celery, sliced
2 green onions, sliced
1 radish, thinly sliced
1/4 cup dried cherries
1/4 cup goat cheese, feta or blue cheese, crumbled

With a spatula, mix together the brown sugar and maple extract (the extract will stain your hands). Add the pecans and stir to coat. Pour in a single layer onto a parchment lined baking sheet and bake 8-10 minutes at 300 degrees until toasted. Remove, stir and spread into a single layer and let cool.

Cut the acorn squash open lengthwise and scoop out the seeds and fibers in the middle. Slice crosswise into 1/4" thick half moons. Place on a parchment lined baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil and a sprinkle of kosher salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes, until tender and browned on the bottom side. Remove and let cool.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the mustard, vinegar, maple syrup, salt and pepper. While whisking, slowly add the olive oil. Set dressing aside or refrigerate if making the day before.

In a large bowl toss together the radicchio, kale, celery, green onions and radish. Add dressing and toss to mix. Place in 2 bowls for a main salad or 4 for a side salad and top with squash, cherries, cheese and sprinkle with some of the pecans.