

Seasonal Eating
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.Fall Salad
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Salad luncheons are one of my favorite kinds of potlucks. All of the different combinations of greens and vegetables with chunky add ins like nuts, cheeses, dried fruits and croutons, make for a wide variety of tastes and textures. Usually, summer is the season for salads, but fall salads with their heartier greens and vegetables make a filling and delicious lunch, dinner accompaniment or potluck dish. Plus, they're beautiful on a wooden board or in a pottery bowl with their jewel like vegetable colors peeping out.

So, what makes a fall salad? Start off with a hearty green – no soft, springy butter lettuce here. Let's opt for mixtures of baby kale, spinach, radicchio, cabbage slivers and romaine. These make a good sturdy base for the fall vegetables and fruits. Bagged mixes for chopped salads are good place to start. In the recipe below I used a mix with kale, cabbage, radicchio, broccoli and Brussels sprouts for a super hearty mixture and mixed it with some spinach for a little leafy component. Instead of tomatoes and cucumbers, roasted squashes and sweet potatoes give a great color and toasty flavor to a fall salad. Cubes or slices of butternut, acorn or delicata squash all work well. Pumpkin or sweet potato cubes can also add a fall sweetness to a salad. Toss with a little oil, salt, pepper and some seasonings such as cinnamon, clove, nutmeg or allspice before spreading on a sheet pan lined with foil or parchment paper and baking at 400 degrees until tender. My latest favorite is a spice blend called Baharat which is a middle eastern blend of warm spices which can include black pepper, cardamom, cloves, allspice, cumin, nutmeg, coriander, cinnamon or paprika. We use it in the Mediterranean Eating Pattern class, and it is delicious sprinkled on squash, pumpkin or sweet potato cubes before roasting. Beets are another fall favorite, roasted with just oil, salt and pepper. Brussels sprouts, seared in a pan on the stovetop or roasted in the oven until caramelized are great for fall salads, or they can be thinly sliced and added raw to a salad. For a cooler fall salad try adding raw broccoli, cauliflower or carrots.



Apples and pears are great fresh fruits to add to a fall salad for a little sweetness. Dried fruits such as apricots, cranberries, figs and raisins add a chewy texture and pop of color and flavor. Nuts also add to the heartiness of a fall salad. Toasted pecans or walnuts are perennial favorites but pepitas (pumpkin seeds), sunflower seeds and pine nuts are also good in fall salads. If you are looking to make your salad more of a main dish, add some sliced pan seared pork chops or grilled beef steak slices or sprinkle with cooked bacon.

Fall flavors in the dressing will bring your salad home. Try vinaigrettes made with apple cider or maple syrup. Balsamic vinegar, apple cider vinegar and whole grain mustards are good ingredients as well, enhancing that rich, warm flavor you want in a heartier vinaigrette.

Just because the summer tomatoes and cucumbers are gone, don't leave salads off the table. Add some fall flavors and hearty ingredients for a filling fall salad. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Roasted Vegetable Fall Salad

2 cups butternut squash, peeled and cut into 3/4" cubes
5 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
1/4 teaspoon black pepper, divided
1/4 red onion, cut into vertical slivers
3 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1/2 tablespoon whole grain mustard
5 ounces baby spinach, cleaned, stemmed and coarsely torn
1 (9-ounce) package salad starter bagged mix (Super Kale & Brussels Sprouts)
1/4 cup roasted pepitas
1/4 cup dried cranberries
4 ounces sharp white Cheddar cheese, cut into 1/4" wide sticks about 1/2" long
4 slices bacon, cooked and roughly chopped

In a large bowl, toss the squash with 1 tablespoon vegetable oil. In a small bowl, combine cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper. Sprinkle over squash and toss to coat. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and roast at 400 degrees for 10 minutes. Stir and add the onions to the tray. Roast another 10 minutes or until both are tender. Let cool.

For dressing, whisk together maple syrup, cider vinegar, whole grain mustard, remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper. Slowly whisk in remaining 4 tablespoons vegetable oil.

For salad, combine spinach and salad starter mix. Toss with dressing and place on a large platter or in a bowl. Top with cooled squash and onions, pepitas, cranberries, cheese and bacon. Serve immediately.