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Summer Salads

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It?s the beginning of my favorite time of year (in North Dakota) when shopping for supper takes place in the garden. Days are hot; nights smell like heaven and an assortment of greens make for wonderful summer salads.

I?m not talking about head lettuce and ranch dressing? rather, summer salads are full of textures and tastes and need little or no dressing to be enjoyed. Packed with vitamins and flavor, easy-to-prepare summer salads can be a complete supper in our house.

So let?s come to the table in the next few weeks and enjoy the labors of our gardeners and farmers.

Unlike store-bought heads of lettuce, which my friends and I commonly refer to as solid water because it has not taste and little nutritional value, garden greens are quite the opposite.

Some common greens include spinach, kale, chard, mesclun mixes and leaf lettuces of all varieties and colors.

People laugh when I say I plant mesclun mixes ? which simply put means a mixture of greens ranging from red oak leaf lettuce to different mustards, raddcicio, endive and arugula. Flavors are mild, bitter, mustardy and spicy. Put them all together and wow - flavor sensation salad.

Lettuces are cold weather crops and if you are an early-bird planter like myself, you have already depleted your supply of leaf lettuces, radishes and peas. But, now I?m into Swiss chard, everlasting spinach, kale and garlic scapes.

Many non-gardeners have never heard about garlic scapes. Not to let anything go to waste, gardeners and fine chefs use the scapes, which are removed from garlic plants as soon as they curl, in lieu of garlic. They are very spicy and can be used chopped, sautéed and/or ground into a fine pesto. (Just learned that this weekend from a local farmer).

So go to your farmers market or your garden and get some greens to enjoy this simple recipe that EVERYONE loves. And trust me when I tell it is much healthier for you than dousing greens with bottled dressings.

INGREDIENTS:

Fresh washed greens. Wash, spin dry and store in refrigerator.

Peas, radishes or any other veggies you may have (doesn?t matter where you got them) chopped or diced and

sliced.

Olive oil

Balsamic vinegar

Garlic ? one or two toes.

Salt ? regular or sea

Dry Mustard

Pepper

DIRECTIONS: Peel the garlic toes and crush on a cutting board with the back of a heavy spoon or knife blade. Cover with salt (teaspoon or so depending on how large the salad.) Grind the garlic and salt together into a paste. Put the paste into a small jar and add black pepper and mustard to taste.

Stir in ¼ cup olive oil (once again depends on the size of the salad), and mix well. When you are ready to serve the salad, douse the greens with the olive oil mixture and stir until all leaves are coated. Sprinkle with vinegar to taste and serve immediately.

Your family will love it.

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