

Tomato-Herb Dressing:

I provided a similar recipe for a roasted tomato dressing with garlic scapes during week 1. Since the tomato season is now in full swing, it seems appropriate to provide it as a reminder. If you find over-ripe tomatoes in your kitchen, there's no need to throw them away. Instead, consider this quick and easy dressing.

Ingredients:

- 1 Large tomato (preferably one that is too ripe to eat)
- 1 Cup of basil leaves
- 1 Cup of other mixed herbs, such as mint or dill (leaves only)
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 Cup of extra virgin olive oil
- Salt to taste
- a Pinch of Sugar

Steps:

1. Cut the tomato into 8 equal sized pieces and place on a baking sheet. Sprinkle with a pinch of sugar, a pinch of salt and drizzle with a touch of the olive oil. Bake for 20 minutes at 350f. Let cool.
2. In a blender, combine the herb leaves and vinegar. Blend until herbs are minced.
3. Add the roasted tomato to the blender and let the tomato puree until creamy.
4. While the blender is in slow motion, add the olive oil in a slow but steady stream, until blended into the tomato mixture.
5. Salt to taste.
6. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Spaghetti “alla Mezzanotte”

Serves 4

This recipe for spaghetti with fresh tomatoes, basil and garlic is a family dish that my cousins and I eat in Sicily during the summer. The name means midnight-style spaghetti because we only make this dish on late summer nights when we are all gathered in the courtyard and get a unanimous hankering for a bite to eat - which usually happens every night.

Ingredients:

1 Pint Golden Tomatoes, sliced in half
1 Slicing Tomato, diced in small cubes
Garlic, finely chopped
Basil, finely chopped
1 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Sea Salt

Steps:

1. In a large pot, bring water to a boil and then salt with the sea salt until the water tastes like the ocean.
2. Then, cook the spaghetti until al dente.
3. Meanwhile, in a sauté pan, heat half the olive oil over a low flame.
4. Add the garlic to the pan and sauté until golden brown. Make sure not to burn it.
5. Add the tomatoes and cook them until the sauce looks somewhat creamy. The riper the tomatoes are, the creamier the sauce will turn.
6. When the spaghetti is cooked, add it to the tomato sauce. Make sure to reserve some of the pasta cooking water.
7. Cook it for another minute so that the sauce coats the spaghetti.
8. Add some water from the pasta to the sauce, if the sauce appears dry.
9. Add the basil and the remainder of the olive oil. Toss and serve immediately.

Melissa's Mediterranean-style Wraps for Parties

Serves 8

Since my teenage years, I've been preparing the following recipe for parties and gatherings of friends. I like to layout all of the cooked ingredients and the spreads on the counter and allow everyone to make their own wraps.

Ingredients:

1 lb Boneless Chicken Thighs, cut into thin strips
1 lb Skirt Steak, cut into thin strips
5 Wala Wala Onions, cut into thin strips
4 Peppers, cut into thin strips
2 Tablespoons Cumin powder
2 Tablespoons Turmeric powder
2 Tablespoons Garlic, made into a paste
1 Tablespoon Spicy Peppers, finely chopped, seeds removed
Sea Salt to Taste
Vegetable oil for cooking

Flour Tortillas

1 Head of Lettuce, sliced into thin strips

Steps:

1. In a mixing bowl, toss the chicken with 1/2 the garlic and 1/2 of the cumin and the turmeric.
2. In a separate bowl, toss the steak with the remainder of garlic, and the spicy peppers.
3. In another bowl, toss the peppers with sea salt to taste and the remainder of the cumin.
4. Finally, in another bowl, toss the onions with sea salt to taste and the remainder of the turmeric.
5. Sauté the chicken, steak, onions and peppers separately with vegetable oil. Cook all of them over a low flame, with the exception of the peppers. The onion should be cooked until it is caramelized. The peppers should not be overcooked, but rather quickly seared until they are slightly charred.
6. The steak and chicken will probably release some water. Allow the water to evaporate and cook until the meat is well cooked inside and brown on the outside. Season the chicken and steak with sea salt to taste - only after they finish cooking.
7. Warm the tortillas individually in a pan. Keep them warm by wrapping them in a warm kitchen towel.
8. Place the lettuce in a serving bowl.

The following sauces/spreads are delicious toppings in the wrap. Make as few or as many as you would like:

Eggplant Spread:

1 Large Eggplant, Charred on the Grill, Pulp removed from the skin
1/2 Cup Tahina - Sesame Seed Paste
Juice of 2 Lemons
1/4 Cup Parsley, Finely Chopped
Sea Salt to Taste
1/4 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil Olive Oil

1. In a mixing bowl, mix the tahina paste with the lemon juice and stir well. Then, add the ice water, which will thin out the mixture and also will make it lighter.
2. Mix the pulp of the eggplant with the tahina mixture, the parsley, the sea salt and the olive oil.
3. Place in a serving bowl and store in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Avocado Spread:

2 Avocados, Mashed
1 Cup Basil, Finely Chopped
Wala Wala Onion, Finely Chopped
1 Slicing Tomato, Finely Chopped
Sea Salt to Taste
Juice of 1 Lemon
Olive Oil

1. Prepare the avocado spread by mixing all of the ingredients in a serving bowl and set aside.

Tomato & Tomatillo Salsa:

5 Small Tomatillos, Finely chopped
1 Pint Golden Tomatoes, Chopped in half
1 Cup Parsley & Mint, Finely Chopped
1 Spicy Pepper, Finely Chopped
1/4 Cup Olive Oil
Sea Salt to Taste

1. Prepare the tomato and tomatillo sauce by mixing all of the ingredients in a serving bowl and set aside.

Greek Yogurt, Cucumber & Mint Spread:

1 Cup Thick Greek Yogurt
1/2 Cup Mint, Finely Chopped
1 Medium Cucumber, finely chopped
1 Teaspoon Garlic Paste
Sea Salt to Taste
1/2 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil

1. Mix all ingredients, with the exception of the olive oil in a serving bowl. Taste for salt and add more if necessary. Then add the olive oil. Reserve in the refrigerator until ready to use.