



## Salad Again?

No one likes a boring salad. Unfortunately, when we are working to lose weight we tend to eat quite a few of them. It doesn't have to be that way. Don't get stuck in the rut of throwing lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers into a bowl and calling it a salad. There are so many things you can do to make a salad a feast for your eyes and your taste buds.

Start by thinking outside the salad box. Try different types of greens as your base. You are only limited by your imagination. Even mixing some spinach or Kale in with your romaine can give you both a change in taste and in texture. Once you have established the base add the things you love.

I like to add steamed or roasted veggies to my salads. It opens new possibilities and adds new layers of flavor. When you roast or grill vegetables the added smokiness and depth of flavor really stands out in a salad. Some of my favorite roasted or grilled additions are bell peppers, eggplant, asparagus, zucchini and cauliflower.

When adding steamed vegetables, I also like to add texture. One of my favorites is green beans that have been steamed and shocked in cold water. This also works well with asparagus, zucchini and cauliflower as well as others like Brussel sprouts (also great roasted) and broccoli. You may have to do some experimentation to find your favorites but you will be eating more vegetables as you do which is a good thing.

As I build my salad I also pay attention to how it looks. Don't just throw everything together and toss it around. Arrange the ingredients on the base in small groupings. Place your tomatoes in two corners with broccoli on one side and bell peppers on the other. Then in the remaining corners you can arrange your roasted zucchini and Brussel sprouts. Finally, lay the roasted asparagus across the center. It will look more appetizing and you will enjoy it even more!

The last step to making a great salad is to dress it properly. Unfortunately, too many of us think this is a matter of opening a bottle and dumping goop all over our pretty vegetables...Wrong! Dressing should begin with seasoning the vegetables in the salad. Open that spice cabinet and grab your favorites. I like to use garlic and onion powders, pepper, oregano, basil and even paprika. You are only limited by your imagination. Using spices, you can add more interest to the vegetables without adding a lot of calories or carbs. When the veggies are seasoned you don't need the bottled goop. Grab your favorite vinegar (mine is a nice balsamic) or lemon juice (lime works well too) and a little olive oil and you will have a salad that will be the envy of the office lunch crowd.

Another trick to keep those healthy meals from getting boring is to change the way you serve your meat and veggies. On those cold days when you just want comfort food, forget the salad. Take your meat and all those great veggies and put them into a hot bowl of low fat, low sodium broth. You can get the comfort and the nutrition without the carbs. If soup isn't what you are in the mood for, take the meat and veggies with a little bit of oil and make a stir-fry. Use a non-stick pan that can handle the heat to minimize the amount of oil. When you leave out the excess oil and starchy sauces, stir-fry can be a very healthy meal.

Make life easier for yourself during salad prep as well. Cut up extra vegetables for future salads and put them in containers. They make for handy snacks right of the fridge but also make getting a great salad ready when you are pressed for time much easier. If you don't use them in your salads soon enough simply use what is left to make a great stir-fry or soup. Keep the seasonings and spices you like on your salad in a location that is convenient for you. If they are easier to grab you are less likely to turn to the things that aren't as good for you. Lastly, always remember to have some fun when making your salads, try new things and new combinations. Your exciting salads will be the thing you look forward to enjoying. Oh, and those coworkers who used to disparage your "diet" food will want you to share with them.