

December / January – Quick Summer Salads

A combined newsletter this time. We were in Bali on holidays until well into December then with Christmas and New Year, the remainder flew by. Normally we find the local fare in Bali a little tiresome but this time we found a local driver with a passion for food – a real Balinese foodie, and he took us to lots of local eating houses which, as a tourist you simply would never have found, so we had some fantastic meals. If anyone is off to Bali I can give you his contact details and can recommend his services as a driver and guide. I was thinking it could be fun to organise a food tour to share these local finds with others, but given my commitments here I can't see that happening for some time. Is it of interest to anyone though? You would have to like spicy food and be willing to venture into the local eating establishments.

There never seems to be enough time over summer for pottering around the kitchen cooking up a storm and even when there is, I always find that I would rather be in the garden, taking a walk, or relaxing with visitors. So I am going to share with you some of my personal favourite salads selected on the basis of great flavour of course, but also on speed of preparation. Most can be varied according to ingredients to hand but all rely for the best results on great quality fresh ingredients. I generally have fresh basil, heirloom tomatoes, kaffir lime leaves, rocket plus other herbs and green vegetables in my garden throughout summer so the best part of summer salads is venturing out to select the ingredients and creating according to the harvest.

Zucchini Carpaccio

I like to grow a couple of zucchini plants and harvest the flowers for cooking but if I miss the flowers at the right time, I pick the baby zucchinis and make this salad. If the zucchinis are any older than this, the dish loses its appeal. Similarly, I would not bother with this dish unless I had my own home grown rocket or a good supplier at a farmers market. The flavour simply is not there in most commercially grown rocket. Luckily for us we have some excellent organic producers in the Granite Belt to turn to if the home crop is not performing. Ray and Samantha Palmer at [Symara Organic Farm](#) are currently providing us with some lovely produce and the heirloom tomatoes have just begun so look for some tomato recipes in February. Look out for Ray at your local farmers market in Brisbane.

Very young zucchini (allow 2 for 2 people)

Fresh rocket

Juice of ½ lemon

1 ½ tablespoons olive oil

Maldon salt and freshly ground black pepper

A piece of the best Parmesan you can get, shaved with a chefs knife into slivers

Slice the zucchini very finely and dress with the lemon juice, oil and salt and pepper. Leave a few minutes to marinate. Arrange the rocket in a bowl, scatter the zucchini over and then the parmesan slivers.

Smoked Trout Caesar Salad

A bit of license taken with the name but this is a terrific dish for a summer lunch or dinner and can be put together in 10 minutes if you have the ingredients to hand. I have not given quantities as it will depend on how many you are feeding and how big you want the salads to be. Try it with the [Tobin Wines Isabella Semillon 2007](#).

Ingredients:

Salad leaves – whatever you prefer but I find the crispness of baby cos perfect
Orange Vinaigrette (see below)
Oranges
Smoked trout fillets
Shaved Parmesan

Method:

Peel the rind from the oranges removing all of the pith and outside membrane. With a sharp knife slice beside the dividing membranes to extract the segments so that they are completely free of membrane and pith. As long as you have a good sharp knife this is not as difficult as it sounds.

Toss the leaves in vinaigrette and arrange on plates. Scatter with the orange segments, smoked trout and shaved parmesan. Serve with a loaf of the Olive Oil and Herb Bread from the November newsletter.

Orange Vinaigrette:

½ cup extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons [LiraH sweet chardonnay vinegar](#)
3 tablespoons fresh orange juice
1 teaspoon grated orange zest
1 egg coddled for 1 minute

Whisk all ingredients together and refrigerate if not using immediately. Sufficient for 4 salads.

Chicken, Mango and Melon Salad with Gingered Mayonnaise

A wonderfully delicious, satisfying summer salad – a particular favourite of my daughter whose entertaining successes would be lessened if she lost this recipe. Make the ginger mayonnaise ahead (it keeps well) and poach the chicken breasts the day before and you will be able to assemble and serve this in a few minutes. Serve with some fresh crusty bread on the side and a crisp white wine. We love the [Ballandean Estate Semillon Sauvignon Blanc](#) with this.

Ingredients:

6 small chicken breasts (I use [Inglewood Farms Organic Chicken](#))
3 ripe mangos, peeled, the cheeks removed and sliced thinly
¼ honeydew melon, peeled and thinly sliced
Crisp salad leaves (butter, cos, iceberg would all be good)
Ginger Mayonnaise

Use a stainless steel or enamelled fry pan with a well fitting lid. Melt a little butter and add the chicken breasts, smooth side down and cook slowly with the lid on for 3 minutes. Turn over and cook for another 3 minutes. When the fillet is just cooked, remove and refrigerate until well chilled before slicing.

To assemble, arrange thin slices of honeydew melon radiating outwards on individual plates (or a large platter if it will be part of a buffet), arrange the salad leaves on top and scatter with the mango slices and the chicken slices. Pour some ginger mayonnaise over and serve the remainder in a jug.

Ginger Mayonnaise:

1 cup good mayonnaise (see below)
1 cup sour cream
finely grated zest of 1½ lemons
6 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons honey
finely grated green ginger to taste

Combine ingredients.

Mayonnaise:

3 egg yolks
½ teaspoon each of salt, mustard powder and freshly ground pepper
300ml oil – I prefer to mix about 1/3 extra virgin olive oil with a vegetable oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Beat the egg yolks until sticky then add the seasonings. Gradually beat in a tablespoon of oil a drop at a time then continue adding the oil in a very slow steady stream. Towards the end, add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice then the remainder of the oil. Add the extra lemon juice to taste if required.

Chefs Notes – for members only – (to join follow the links on our main navigation bar)

Chickpea Salad

A salad with plenty of substance. Great for a barbecue, served with a small rack of lamb or simply by itself – it has everything you need. The following ingredient list is entirely flexible so use what you have and add flavours to your taste preferences.

Ingredients:

1 can chickpeas
1 small butternut or other pumpkin, or sweet potato
Rocket / baby spinach leaves
fresh basil leaves
1 red capsicum, diced
2 oranges, segmented
1 – 2 avocados
pickled ginger
toasted sesame seeds
Dressing: 1 tsp Dijon mustard
 small clove garlic
 orange juice
 LiraH sweet cabernet vinegar
 Mt Stirling Olives Extra Virgin Olive oil

Method:

Peel the pumpkin or sweet potato, cut into pieces that are not too large and roast with a drizzle of Olive Oil until cooked through and with some nicely caramelised edge bits. Cool.

Drain and rinse the chick peas, combine with the other ingredients and toss with the dressing when ready to serve.

For the dressing, whisk all ingredients together.