

Variety in Salads

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TO many people "salad" suggests nothing more than shredded lettuce with sliced tomatoes and, perhaps, cucumbers, radishes, and spring onions; but the variety of salads is almost endless, and vegetables both cooked and raw can be added to provide interesting and unusual dishes. By using various vegetable combinations the "salad season" can be made to last the whole year round, and as most vegetables contain vitamin C, salads can be used to provide part of the daily supply of this vitamin when fruit is scarce or unprocurable. Minerals, roughage, and bulk are also supplied by fresh vegetables.

A GREEN-LEAF vegetable should form the basis of a salad. Lettuce is the most commonly used, but many more can be included in the list of possibilities, and most of the other greens actually contain far more vitamin C. Raw shredded heart of young cabbage, tender celery leaves, green tops of spring onions, chives, mustard, cress, watercress, parsley, nasturtium leaves, mint, young dandelion leaves, and endive—any of these greens can be substituted for the more orthodox lettuce. Turnip leaves are also used, but the "hairiness" of the texture is distasteful to many people. Young, tender root vegetables may be used raw; grated raw carrot is crisp and appetising; shredded raw beetroot makes excellent "trimming" and is a change from the more usual mode of serving. Cooked carrot, potato, parsnip, swede, turnip, and beetroot make good salads and afford a way of using "left-overs" without reheating.

Other ingredients for salads are radishes, tomatoes, peas, beans, celery, tree tomatoes, green peppers or capsicums, cucumber, grapefruit, oranges, dates, nuts, raisins, cauliflower, asparagus, and apples. Variations in flavourings for salads are obtainable by including herbs, parsley, chives, spring onion tops, horseradish, and various dressings. Garnishings or decorations can be made of parsley, onion, celery, radish, tomato, carrot, hard-boiled egg, etc. To make curled celery, cut 3in.

lengths of crisp celery sticks. Slit the pieces down 1in. deep into thin strips and cut through the fibre on the outside of the stalks at the base of the slits. Leave standing in cold water until the cut ends curl. For radish roses cut turnip-shaped radishes down at the root end into four or six sections, taking care not to make the cut right through. Leave in cold water until the sections open out. Carrot sticks are made by cutting pieces of carrot into strips about the thickness and the length of a match. Use round spring onions and cut into thin slices for onion rings, separating the sections under water.

Preparation of Ingredients

Lettuce and other green stuff are best if used as soon as possible after picking or buying, as the vitamin content continuously decreases after the vegetables have been gathered. For the same reason green vegetables should not be cut up until just before serving. If it is necessary to store the lettuce for a while, put it in a saucepan with a well-fitting lid and stand on a cool floor. To crisp wilted leaves let them lie in cold water for about one hour, drain and roll up in cloth, and stand in the coldest place available. Wash greenstuff carefully in cold water to remove soil, spray, and insects; shake off water gently and dry in a clean cloth or toss into a wire basket to drain.

Whole lettuce leaves are required for some salads, and it is often difficult to take them from a well-grown lettuce with a firm heart. Take off the outer leaves, cut out the stalk base and hold the lettuce inverted under running water. The force will make the leaves separate and they can then be detached without tearing. Shred raw green vegetables with a sharp knife; hearts of cabbage should be cut very fine, but lettuce and tender greens can be cut more coarsely. Wash carrots and scrape them lightly; grate them if they are to be used raw. Turnips and swedes are sometimes found to be too strongly flavoured for using raw, but when cooked and then diced or sliced they are acceptable. All cooked vegetables should be drained well and be quite dry and cold before combining with the rest of the salad, and green stuff should be crisp and handled as little as possible.

A salad can easily be the most decorative part of the meal table, for well-chosen arrangements of the different ingredients are very colourful. When the main dish is to be salad, eggs, meat, fish, or cheese should be included to provide proteins. Served with bread or potatoes such a salad will provide a satisfying and nutritious meal. Many people find a meal of this kind more attractive if soup is served first or a hot sweet follows.

Serving Salads

Salads may be made in a bowl, and served with spoon and fork by one person, or may be handed round the table. Another way is to place the mixed portions of salad on "nests" or "cups" of lettuce leaves and arrange on one flat plate or dish for ease in serving. If desired, some salads can be arranged on individual plates, and this way of serving is very useful when a salad is to form the main dish at the meal. Small moulds of fish, cooked meat, tomato or beetroot, set on lettuce with little mounds of various vegetables arranged round, make an attractive and healthful lunch dish. These jellied salads, whether large or small, are particularly suitable for summer meals.

