

Salad FOR DINNER

Simple recipes for salads that make a meal



TASHA DE SERIO

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TASHA DESERIO



The Taunton Press



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data TK

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

DEDICATION

To my parents, for everything.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writer Laurie Colwin once said, "No one who cooks cooks alone. Even at her most solitary, a cook in the kitchen is surrounded by generations of cooks past, the advice and menus of cooks present, and the wisdom of cookbook writers."

I have had the good fortune to learn from a family of enthusiastic cooks and eaters, talented friends and colleagues, and countless cookbook authors.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

To my editor, Carolyn Mandarano, thank you for the opportunity, as well as your generous support, guidance, and kindness throughout the process.

Many thanks to the design and production group at Taunton for bringing the project to life, including Alison Wilkes, Carol Singer, Katy Binder, and Amy Griffin.

Thank you to photographer Kate Sears, food stylist William Smith, and prop stylist Paige Hicks for the beautiful images.

Thank you to Doe Coover, agent and new friend.

To everyone at *Fine Cooking* magazine, especially Rebecca Freedman, thank you for the many opportunities to work together through the years—it's always a pleasure.

To all of my friends, colleagues, and staff at Olive Green Catering, especially Brian Espinoza, Samantha Greenwood, Kathy Batt, Curt Clingman, and Edgar Atoche. Thank you for years of inspiration and good work.

To all of my friends and colleagues at Chez Panisse, especially Alice Waters and chefs Gilbert Pilgram, Peggy Smith, Russell Moore, and Cal Peternell—thank you.

For help with recipe testing, thank you to Carri Wilkinson for a spot-on palate and attention to detail—and for good conversation in the kitchen.

To Joanne Weir, friend, mentor, and faithful dinner companion, thank you for advice and encouragement early on, and now.

To my friend, Charlene Reis, for listening to me talk about writing a cookbook for 15 years.

To my neighbors, Erik Schmitt and Kim O'Neill, for tasting salad after salad—and offering a glass of wine when I needed it.

To dear friends Jim Wilson and Annette Flores.

To Catherine Huchting, for constant support and enthusiasm.

To Kimberly Dooley, for countless cups of tea and moments of respite.

To the DeSerio, Richie, Pellouchoud, and Simon-Thomas families—especially Rosemary Richie—for a seemingly endless supply of time and energy for family, and grandchildren in particular.

Thank you to my brother, Lane Freitas, for writing guidance and unique insight.

To my sister, Jill Hoffman, for humor and straight talk when I need it.

To my parents, Stanley and Marsha Freitas, for truly believing in me, always.

For comic relief, thank you to my son, Nicolas DeSerio. It's hard to take life too seriously when you're talking to a 3-foot-tall Spider-Man with blue eyes and bulging foam muscles.

Thank you to my son, Luke DeSerio, for an amazing palate and careful recipe critique.

Last but not least, thank you to my wonderful husband, Michael DeSerio, for helping me get this project done in the midst of it all. And for never tiring of salad for dinner.



CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION 2

Making a Simple Salad 0

Leafy Salads 0

Vegetable & Fruit Salads 0

Grain, Bread, & Pasta Salads 0

Legume Salads 0

METRIC EQUIVALENTS 000 • INDEX 000

INTRODUCTION



WHEN I WAS YOUNG, SALAD WAS ALWAYS SERVED

with the meal, it was never *the meal*. I come from a family of meat and potato eaters. My dad was a dairyman in the central valley of California, and my mom was a stay-at-home mother for most of my childhood. She cooked and cooked! Dinner centered around meat. We butchered our own beef, pork, and lamb, so there was frequently a package of meat defrosting on the countertop. I clearly recall my mom planning dinner, ticking the three major elements off on her fingers: Meat. Starch. Vegetable. Salad, when served, counted as the vegetable—or an extra vegetable.

Nowadays, salads play a different role at the table. More and more of us are interested in eating fresh, seasonal, and organic foods as well as whole grains and legumes; in making conscious choices about the type of meat and fish we're eating and how often; and in gardening and raising chickens for eggs. This is thrusting salads into the spotlight as *the* meal.

I love making and eating salads, but in the course of writing this book and making an inordinate amount of salads, it dawned on me: This is a good way to eat. The focus is naturally on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes; meat, fish, eggs, and cheeses are used in moderation. In my house, we make an effort to follow Michael Pollan's simple suggestion in *In Defense of Food*: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." Salads fit. Better yet, they suit today's busy lifestyles, including mine. Salads are relatively fast and easy to make, particularly when you're in the habit of preparing certain elements in advance, like washing lettuces or cooking vegetables, legumes, and grains. You can stand in front of the refrigerator at the end of a long day, take an inventory, and make a quick salad.

Making salads is an art. A delicious, healthful art. I enjoy working with beautiful raw ingredients, making the many aesthetic decisions that the salad cook makes along the way. While cooking at Chez Panisse, the salad station was my favorite station on the line: I enjoyed the detail and the process of plating each salad *just so*. Even more, I enjoyed seeing the other cooks interpret the same salad in different ways; rustic, hearty salads versus neatly arranged, delicate salads. One cook might cut beets into coins and dot them on the plate, whereas another would choose to cut them into irregularly shaped jewels and toss them in the salad. Given the same handful of ingredients and instruction, each cook's salads were uniquely his or her own.

My hope is that this book will give you recipes for inspiration and guidance on making salads a meal, as well as the information to wing it with what's on hand when necessary. The recipes are divided according to leafy, vegetables and fruit, grain, and legume salads, and the recipes are in order of the seasons; spring, summer, fall, winter. I've included information on how to select good-quality fruits and vegetables, as well as outline the myriad of ways to cut them, with the hope that you will make these salads your own. I've also included suggestions on how to make lighter salads more satisfying for hearty eaters. (My husband, hearty-eater extraordinaire, tasted nearly every one of these salads and more often than not said, "Well, it wouldn't hurt if you added a little pork.") Enjoy!