



Turn a salad into a satisfying meal

To me, a simple composed salad is a quick but somehow elegant supper.

I always start with a bed of greens. On top of that goes raw or cooked vegetables and hot, sautéed, crispy little pieces of fish or meat. (I'll have tossed the greens with a slightly pungent vinaigrette to balance the richness of the meat or fish.) Finally, I pull the flavors together with a flourish or two: capers, anchovies, fresh herbs, a few sun-dried tomatoes, or olives. The whole thing usually comes together in under 15 minutes.

The recipe here calls for pan-seared sea scallops, but I use the same quick cooking technique for all kinds of ingredients: quickly searing the meat or fish on very high heat so the outside browns and the inside remains juicy. I then deglaze the pan with wine or Cognac so I can retrieve all the flavors left there.

Any salad green can be a good base. I particularly like greens with a slightly bitter edge, such as arugula, radicchio, endive, watercress, frisée, escarole, dandelion, or a mix of several. These greens also don't wilt as fast as more delicate lettuces when tossed with something hot.

Try not to add too many ingredients. The salad should be streamlined, including just a few complementary ingredients, not a catch-all to clean out your refrigerator.

Here are a few specific combinations I've found particularly delicious:

- ◆ Sautéed chicken livers (deglazed with Cognac) on escarole, with boiled new potatoes, blanched string beans, and walnuts, with a walnut oil and sherry vinegar dressing.
- ◆ Skirt steak, pan-seared and sliced, on chicory, with crumbled Gorgonzola, red onion, and beefsteak tomato wedges, dressed with olive oil, red-wine vinegar, and a touch of garlic.
- ◆ Sautéed chanterelles or morels on frisée, with string beans, julienned prosciutto, and croutons, tossed with a shallot vinaigrette.
- ◆ Pan-seared slices of garlic sausage on romaine lettuce, with roasted red pepper strips and bits of soft goat cheese, tossed with a basil and lemon dressing.

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Seared Scallop Salad

For best results, look for "dry" scallops, not ones marked "water added," and remove the tough tabs of muscle with your fingers. A couple of minced anchovies and a tablespoon of rinsed capers would give the salad a briny touch. *Serves two as a main course.*

- 1 lemon
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbs. heavy cream
- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- Pinch sugar
- Coarse salt (preferably sea salt) and freshly ground black pepper
- 5 small new potatoes, boiled until tender, cut in half or quarters if large, and kept warm
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. large sea scallops, patted dry
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 Tbs. unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry white wine or vermouth
- 5 cups mesclun or 2 large bunches watercress, trimmed, rinsed, and dried
- 1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh chives

Grate the zest from the lemon, reserve it, and squeeze the juice from half the lemon into a large bowl. Add the mustard and cream, whisking to blend. Slowly add the extra-virgin olive oil, whisking until thickened. Season with the sugar, salt, and pepper. Add the cooked potatoes and toss to coat.

Season the scallops with salt and pepper. Heat a heavy-based skillet on high and add the olive oil. When the oil is very hot, add the butter. Add the scallops, leaving a bit of space between them. Sear them without moving them around. When they're well browned at the bottom edges (after about 2 min.), turn and brown the other side, about 1 min. or so more. Remove the scallops from the pan and pour off the fat. Put the pan back over medium heat. Add the lemon zest and wine or vermouth to deglaze, scraping up any bits stuck to the bottom. Cook until the wine is reduced to a syrupy glaze. Remove from the heat.

Add the mesclun to the warm potatoes and dressing and toss to coat the greens. Divide the salad between two dinner plates.

Arrange the scallops on the greens. Pour the glaze from the pan over the scallops and garnish with the chives. Serve right away, with a warm baguette and a glass of cold rosé.