

Peasant's Supper Salad (for 4-6 with leftovers)

from Lynne's Sunday Suppers, July 2000

Don't be put off by the many ingredients: bits and pieces from the fridge, pantry, garden, or market! You just blend everything together and let the ingredients get to know each other. Stale bread is still like money in the bank for most Mediterranean peoples: the best bread for salads. This salad cashes in on the first cherry tomatoes of the season, but do improvise with whatever fresh vegetables are at their peak. Shop at the farmer's market, or get what's ripe in the garden. This salad's prettiest on a plain white platter or bowl. Serve cool, but never ever cold.

- 1 medium red onion, cut into 1/2" dice
- About 4 C ice water
- About 4 C (1/2 loaf) leftover coarse chewy country bread (in 1" pieces)
- 7 TBS wine vinegar, and more as needed
- 1/2 C cold water
- 2 oil-packed anchovy fillets (they deepen/enrich the salad without being tasted)
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1 small stalk celery with leaves, thinly sliced
- 2 sweet yellow peppers cut into 1/2" dice
- 1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded, and diced
- 2 1/2 lbs ripe, delicious-tasting cherry tomatoes (2-3 baskets of organic grape, 'Sweet 100s' or 'Sun Gold' varieties), halved
- Handful sugar snap peas, trimmed/halved
- About 18 fresh basil leaves
- 1 medium-hot fresh chile, seeded and chopped (optional)
- 12 Italian oil-cured or Greek Kalamata olives, pitted
- 3 whole scallions
- 1 TBS capers, rinsed
- 6 or so fresh mint leaves
- 3 TBS fruity extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 oz ricotta, salata or feta cheese, crumbled
- Salt + freshly ground black pepper to taste

In small bowl, cover onions with ice water. Put bread in medium bowl, tossing with 3 TBS vinegar + 1/2 C water. Chill 30 minutes while preparing other ingredients. // In large bowl, mash together anchovy, garlic & remaining 4 TBS vinegar. Let stand about 10 minutes (this mutes the anchovy). Add celery, peppers, cucumber, tomatoes and peas. // Set aside a few whole herb leaves, then finely chop the rest with the garlic, chile (if using), olives, scallions & capers. Add these to bowl. Drain onions and toss them in the bowl, too. // Squeeze bread dry. Fold it gently into salad along with the cheese. Taste for seasoning, adding a little more vinegar if needed. Garnish with herb leaves. Serve at room temperature.