

A Star Is Born

Through the years there have been many “stars” on the salad scene, including Caesar, Cobb and wedge. Now it’s the age of the chopped salad. Just look around - chopped salads are on every menu! The best thing about this salad is that anything goes. Caryn Ross shares her steakhouse-inspired version with us this month. *See page 98.*





Chop, Chop

By Caryn Ross Photos by Carli Wentworth

In Oklahoma there are an abundance of phenomenal steakhouses. Many people would think that I would judge the quality of the restaurant by their fine meat selection... but that is not so. I love a good steakhouse salad. You can make your chopped salad based on what you have on hand or is in season.

The only downside to a chopped salad is that once you toss it with dressing, you must eat it right then. Unfortunately, these little salad gems are not good for keeping - the dressing, along with all of the other add-ins, causes the salad to wilt and become mushy. So make a big deal out of your creation and enjoy it!

Here is my favorite chopped salad. I modeled it after one at a famous steakhouse that can be found all over the country... I used to think I loved their steaks but once I got home I was craving more of this salad. This is perfect to serve alongside steaks or any time you fire up the grill. ●

Here are a few tips to create an amazing chopped salad for your meal.

CHOOSE:

- » 1 or 2 salad greens: mixed, spinach, romaine, etc.
- » a protein like salmon, shellfish, chicken, steak or bacon
- » 2 or 3 vegetables, using what's in season or trying something altogether new
- » Cheese
- » Some crunch - nuts or croutons
- » Complementary dressing, either vinaigrette or creamy



Steakhouse Chopped Salad

Yields 4 servings

- 1 head of iceberg lettuce
- 3 c baby spinach
- ½ c crumbled bleu cheese
- 1 c halved cherry tomatoes
- 1 c crispy fried onions
- 1 c herb-seasoned croutons
- ½ c red onion
- ½ c fresh mushrooms
- ¼ c green olives
- ¼ c hearts of palm
- 8 slices crisp cooked thick-cut hickory smoked bacon
- 2 hardboiled eggs



Dressing

- 1 c mayonnaise
- Juice of 1 lemon, freshly squeezed
- ½ c fresh chiffonade basil leaves
- Coarse salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

To make the dressing, combine all ingredients in a small jar, cover and shake well. For a creamier texture, mix in a blender. Place in refrigerator for at least 4 hours before serving to allow flavors to marry.

Chop the lettuce and spinach and place in a large salad bowl. Add cheese, tomatoes, croutons and fried onions. Finely chop the remaining ingredients and add to bowl.

To serve the salad, I toss all of the ingredients with enough dressing to coat. Then I use a clean can and remove both ends to make a cylinder. Place the can on a plate and fill two-thirds of the way with salad mixture. Gently remove can and top salad column with additional fried onions and bleu cheese crumbles. Voila! Fancy salad that doesn't taste fancy!