

The Salad Meal

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There is more to salads than being mere side servings and looking pretty. When it comes to cuisine today, salad is the epitome of all things holistic, healthy, bright and beautiful. Salads are "happy food", as most people fondly say. Salads are not just salt on vegetables any more ("salad" in Latin is "herba salata", which translates as "salted vegetables"), but have evolved into a fine culinary art of blending the right seasoning with just the right ingredients for the right course of meal. Apart from being served as starters and accompaniments to a good meal, they can be consumed as a complete meal, and it could be one of your most fulfilling and nutritious meals. I am not saying you could consume the raw, sour, cold salad you normally eat as your main meal though it may have all the healthy ingredients. But if the combinations, seasoning, and serving temperature are not right for the time the meal is intended for consumption, you could end with sour burps and indigestion rather than the healthful benefits you desired.

GENERAL GUIDELINES TO MAKING A NUTRITIOUS SALAD MEAL

The salad should not be sour. Try to avoid acidic fruits like pineapple, unripe apples, mangoes, papaya, to name a few. Given that you're more likely to be hungry at meal times, the acid could attack the lining of your empty stomach. The salad should be eaten at room temperature or warm. Never cold! Non-vegetable items like chicken, fish, shrimps, pork, beef and lamb should be cooked if they are included as ingredients. Note: A salad meal is an excellent substitute for mainstream food on days you want to take it easy on the stomach. However, if you are leading a lifestyle of high-energy demand, taking salad meals may not be a good lifestyle choice. Here is a wholesome recipe for such a fulfilling, holistic meal. It could be customized according to your taste and culture. Just remember the guiding stars above.

DID YOU KNOW ... We could use a variety of conventionally nutritious vegetables like cucumbers and tomatoes, but toss them together with lemons and potatoes (each of which are also very healthy in their own right), and we could end up with a case of sour burps and indigestion! A few adverse food combos to be avoided are:

- Lemon (in quantity) taken together with cucumber, tomatoes, yoghurt, cheese and milk
- Yoghurt consumed with sour fruits, melons, mangoes and bananas; also with cheese, fish and meat
- Night-shade plants (potatoes, tomatoes, egg-plants) with yoghurt, melons, milk and cucumbers
- Melons: golden rule is "Eat them alone, or leave them alone"! Incompatible with everything.

RECIPE (SERVES ONE) Fresh bean sprouts (2 fistfuls), spring onions (1 or 2 leafy stems), tofu (10 cut slices), potato (10-12 thin slices), peppers/capsicum (chopped, 2 tablespoons), carrot (thin shred-like slices, 2 tablespoons), olive oil (extra virgin - 1 tablespoon), garlic (1-2 cloves for flavour), soft ginger (3-4 thin slices for flavour, also good for digestion), salt and black pepper.

Method: Steam the slices of potato, carrot, bean sprouts, spring onions, tofu, and capsicum. Next, heat olive oil in a skillet. Add garlic and ginger slices. Once their aroma is released, add the steamed veggies. Toss and turn, then remove from heat. Add a pinch of fresh rock or sea salt. and black pepper from the hand-held grinder. If you want a hint of sourness, add a pinch of mango powder. A drizzle of lemon or honey vinegar would also be a good alternative. Serve warm.