

5 Show-Stopping Salads That Steal the Show

+ Homemade Dressing Recipes

*Impressive salads that look like you spent hours
but actually take just minutes to make!*

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Welcome!

Thanks for downloading this guide! I'm so excited to share these amazing salad recipes with you.

Let's be honest—salads can be boring. But they don't have to be! These 5 recipes are my go-to dishes when I want to impress at potlucks, BBQs, and family gatherings. They look absolutely stunning, taste incredible, and (here's the best part) they're surprisingly easy to make.

What Makes These Salads Special?

- ✓ **Visual Impact:** These aren't your average side salads—they're showstoppers that look like restaurant dishes
- ✓ **Quick & Easy:** Most take 30 minutes or less with no cooking required
- ✓ **Crowd-Pleasers:** Everyone loves these—from picky eaters to foodies
- ✓ **Make-Ahead Friendly:** Perfect for meal prep and party planning
- ✓ **Homemade Dressings:** Skip the bottled stuff—these recipes taste so much better!

"The secret to a memorable salad? Layers of flavor and texture. Don't just throw lettuce in a bowl—build something beautiful!"

I hope these recipes become staples in your kitchen just like they are in mine. Happy cooking!

Angela

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Easy Seven Layer Salad

Prep Time: 25 minutes | Serves: 12 | Chill Time: 4 hours

This classic layered salad is perfect for any occasion! The beautiful layers in a trifle bowl create a stunning presentation that looks like you spent hours in the kitchen. It's ideal for Easter dinner, summer BBQs, or any gathering where you want to impress.

Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 1 head iceberg lettuce, washed and torn into pieces
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 2 large tomatoes, chopped
- 1 (12 oz) package frozen peas, thawed
- 6-8 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1½ cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese, divided
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion

For the Dressing:

- 1½ cups mayonnaise
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon dried dill weed
- ¾ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Instructions

1. In a trifle bowl, layer the salad in this order: lettuce, eggs, tomatoes, peas, bacon, 1 cup cheese, and red onion. Press down after each layer to create an even line along the outer edge.
2. In a mixing bowl, whisk together all dressing ingredients until smooth.
3. Spread dressing over the salad in an even layer.
4. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.
5. Before serving, garnish with remaining ½ cup cheese and fresh parsley if desired.

Pro Tip: To make it keto-friendly, simply omit the peas and add cucumber or bell peppers instead!

The Best Italian Salad

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Serves: 6 | Perfect for: Lunch or Dinner

This Italian salad is loaded with savory meats, rich cheeses, and briny olives—it's like eating an Italian sub in salad form! Quick to make and incredibly flavorful, it's perfect for meal prep too.

Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 3 cups romaine lettuce, coarsely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
- ½ cup pitted Kalamata olives
- ½ cup pitted green olives
- 1 cup diced deli ham slices
- 1 cup diced hard salami slices
- 1 cup diced pepperoni slices
- ½ cup diced provolone cheese slices

For the Dressing:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, toss together all salad ingredients.
2. To make the dressing, whisk together all dressing ingredients or place in a jar, seal with lid, and shake to combine.
3. Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat.
4. Serve immediately or store covered in refrigerator.

Storage Tip: If storing, don't add dressing to the entire bowl—just add it to each serving to keep veggies fresh and crisp.

Broccoli Cauliflower

Crunch Salad

Prep Time: 20 minutes | Serves: 8 | Great for: Potlucks

This crunchy salad is loaded with fresh vegetables, bacon, and sunflower seeds—it's a reader favorite! The sweet and tangy dressing ties everything together perfectly.

Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 4 cups broccoli florets, chopped small
- 4 cups cauliflower florets, chopped small
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- ½ cup red onion, diced
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 8 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup dried cranberries

For the Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, red onion, cheese, bacon, sunflower seeds, and cranberries.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper until smooth.
3. Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat evenly.
4. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving to let flavors meld.

Make-Ahead Tip: This salad actually gets better after sitting! Make it the night before for best results.

Cucumber Strawberry Salad

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Serves: 6 | Perfect for: Summer

This refreshing summer salad combines crisp cucumbers with sweet strawberries and fresh herbs. It's light, colorful, and absolutely delicious—perfect for hot days!

Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 2 large English cucumbers, thinly sliced
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
- ¼ cup fresh mint leaves, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, torn
- ¼ cup red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese

For the Dressing:

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine cucumbers, strawberries, mint, basil, and red onion.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, balsamic vinegar, honey, salt, and pepper.
3. Pour dressing over salad and toss gently.
4. Top with crumbled feta cheese and serve immediately.

Fresh Tip: This salad is best served immediately—the cucumbers will release water if it sits too long.

Classic Greek Salad

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Serves: 6 | Perfect for: Any Occasion

A traditional Greek salad with crisp vegetables, tangy feta, and briny Kalamata olives. Simple, fresh, and bursting with Mediterranean flavors!

Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 4 cups romaine lettuce, chopped
- 2 large tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 1 English cucumber, sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup Kalamata olives
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese

For the Dressing:

- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, bell pepper, red onion, and olives.
2. In a small bowl or jar, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, lemon juice, oregano, garlic, salt, and pepper.
3. Pour dressing over salad and toss to combine.
4. Top with crumbled feta cheese and serve.

Authentic Tip: In Greece, they don't mix the salad—they arrange ingredients and drizzle with dressing. Try it both ways!

5 Homemade Dressing Recipes

Ditch the bottled stuff! These homemade dressings are easy to make and taste infinitely better. Most take less than 5 minutes and can be stored in the fridge for up to a week.

1. Classic Balsamic Vinaigrette

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Whisk all ingredients together or shake in a jar. Perfect for green salads!

2. Creamy Ranch Dressing

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon salt and pepper

Mix all ingredients and refrigerate for 1 hour before serving. Great on everything!

3. Honey Mustard Dressing

- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Whisk until smooth. Sweet and tangy—perfect for chicken salads!

4. Lemon Herb Vinaigrette

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

Bright and fresh! Perfect for summer salads and grilled vegetables.

5. Creamy Caesar Dressing

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste

Rich and garlicky! So much better than store-bought Caesar.

Make-Ahead Tips &

Pro Presentation Tricks

Make-Ahead Strategies

- **Prep ingredients separately:** Chop vegetables, cook proteins, and make dressings 1-2 days ahead. Store in separate containers.
- **Store dressing separately:** Don't add dressing until serving time to keep salads crisp and fresh.
- **Layer strategically:** For layered salads, place wet ingredients (tomatoes, cucumbers) in the middle, never on bottom.
- **Toast nuts fresh:** If using nuts or seeds, toast them the day of serving for maximum crunch.
- **Add delicate herbs last:** Basil, cilantro, and mint wilt quickly—add them right before serving.

Presentation Pro Tips

- **Use a clear bowl for layered salads:** A trifle bowl or glass serving dish shows off beautiful layers.
- **Create even edges:** When layering, push ingredients to the edge of the bowl first to create clean lines.
- **Garnish generously:** Fresh herbs, extra cheese, or a sprinkle of nuts on top adds visual appeal.
- **Use contrasting colors:** Mix green lettuce with red tomatoes, purple onions, and orange carrots for visual impact.
- **Chill serving bowls:** Place bowls in freezer for 10 minutes before serving to keep salads extra cold.

Storage Guidelines

- **Undressed salads:** Store up to 3 days in airtight containers
- **Dressed salads:** Eat within 24 hours for best quality
- **Homemade dressings:** Keep refrigerated for up to 1 week
- **Layered salads:** Best made 4-24 hours ahead (Seven Layer Salad gets better overnight!)

Scaling for a Crowd

Easy multiplier rule: Double or triple recipes easily—salads are forgiving!

- **For 12-15 people:** Double the recipe
- **For 20-25 people:** Triple the recipe
- **For 30+ people:** Make 2-3 different salads for variety

About Angela

Hi! I'm Angela, the food-loving, marathon-running nurse behind Marathons & Motivation.

I created this blog to share my passion for cooking delicious, family-friendly recipes that actually work in real life. As a busy mom, Registered Nurse, and endurance athlete, I know what it's like to juggle a million things—so all my recipes are designed to be practical, flavorful, and stress-free.

Whether you're meal prepping for the week, hosting a dinner party, or just trying to get a healthy meal on the table, I've got you covered with recipes that are both nutritious and delicious.

Let's Stay Connected!

I'd love to see your salad creations! Share your photos and tag me on social media:

- **Website:** MarathonsAndMotivation.com
- **Instagram:** @marathonsandmotivation
- **Pinterest:** Marathons & Motivation
- **Facebook:** Marathons & Motivation

More Free Resources Coming Soon!

Check your email regularly for more free recipe guides, meal prep tips, and seasonal favorites. I'm always creating new resources to make your time in the kitchen easier and more enjoyable!

Happy cooking!

Angela