



Cassara Consulting
"Your Neighborhood Nutritionists"

Dietitian - Nutritionist - Education - Counseling - Insurance Accepted



1345 Kuser Rd, Suite 5 - Hamilton, NJ 08619 - phone: (609) 585-8400 - visit us on the web at: www.cassaraconsulting.com - email: info@cassaraconsulting.com

Build a Healthy Salad



Bhofac2/Thinkstock

Do you build a healthy salad and then top it with a lot of extra high calorie ingredients? What you sprinkle over your greens, as well as the amount can make or break a salad. Here, we give you the scoop on a few unexpected toppings that will boost the flavor and healthfulness of your salad. Using small amounts and different combinations of ingredients can help add variety to your salads but without all the extra calories.

Salads in Bloom

Your salad has greens, veggies, even fruits — so why not go further into the garden and add flowers too? Edible flowers, which include marigolds, violets, roses, nasturtiums, chive blossoms and pansies, can add color and flavor to your salad. Just be sure to use flowers that are labeled as edible, like the ones you can find in the produce section at the grocery store. Other blooms, which are sold at nurseries and florists may be toxic or grown with dangerous pesticides. Kitchen herb gardens also work well as a way to produce both flowers and plants for edible purposes.

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme

Herbs, whether fresh or dried, are another way to add flavor to salads. Many supermarkets offer fresh herbs already packaged or as plants. Both fresh and dried herbs can be sprinkled on top as garnishes or used to make flavorful vinegars or salad dressings. Try experimenting with different combinations, but start out small. It's also important to know that if a recipe calls for dried herbs, and you want to substitute fresh — one teaspoon of dried is equal to one tablespoon (3 teaspoons) of fresh snipped herbs.

Going Green

Avocados not only taste great, but they are also a good source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat and contain several vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E and potassium. They also provide a decent amount of dietary fiber, which most Americans don't get enough of. Avocados are also very versatile. For example, they can be chopped up and added as a salad ingredient or pureed into a dressing. It's best to prepare them right before serving, because once an avocado is sliced, it will start to discolor. A little squeeze of lemon or lime juice can also help prevent it from browning.

Texture You Can Sink Your Teeth Into

Nuts and seeds not only add interesting flavors to foods, but the crunch they provide can be just what a salad needs sometimes. Sprinkle small amounts of nuts and seeds, such as walnuts, pecans, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, or even pine nuts. They will provide unique flavors and textures when used as salad toppings.

Another ingredient that can really make a salad more satisfying are beans. There are so many varieties to experiment with, but more common types used in salads include black beans, chickpeas (also known as garbanzo beans), and edamame. Cooked beans whether they are purchased frozen, dried, or canned are all good options and a convenient way to get a plant-based source of lean protein.

Croutons typically get a bad rap, but if you make your own and use whole grain breads they can help you meet your daily goal for dietary fiber. Another option is to serve a scoop of cooked whole grains, like quinoa or bulgur, over a mixture of salad greens. It's a great way to get the best of both food groups at one meal.

Looking for ways to get more calcium and vitamin D in your diet? A sprinkle of shredded cheese, such as mozzarella or Parmesan, or crumbled feta can add a lot of flavor with just a small amount. Plus, they are good sources of calcium. Eggs provide vitamin D and when hard boiled, make a great topping for salads.

A Touch of Sweetness

We all know that berries, apples, oranges and pears taste great on their own, but paired with salad greens, the combination of flavors can be extraordinary. Dried fruits, like cherries, cranberries, apricots or raisins can also liven up a salad and may be more convenient to use at certain times of the year. Plus, their flavor has been concentrated, so a smaller amount of dried fruit will provide the same intense flavor as its fresh, whole form.

Dressing It Up

It's hard to imagine salad without dressing, especially with so many options, yet so many calories from fat. Oils, which are considered a healthier form of fat, are needed on a regular basis but only in small amounts. They provide important nutrients and help with the absorption of others, like vitamins A, D, E and K. Fats also help promote a feeling of fullness. Depending on which type of salad dressing you choose, the recommended serving size is just one to two tablespoons – one for mayonnaise-based dressings and two for oil-based ones.

Variety is Key

Try experimenting with different recipes and an assortment of different colored vegetables to keep the salad combinations exciting and healthful. Being mindful of portions and choosing ingredients that pack a lot of flavor and texture but in small amounts will also help. Plus, it will prevent your taste buds from becoming bored.

Reviewed November 2017 by Jill Kohn, MS, RDN, LDN. Published January 11, 2018. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.