

Mediterranean salad dressing

What's so special about this rather standard-sounding vinaigrette? Well, for one it's a lot healthier than store-bought dressings made with refined oils (e.g. soybean, canola, sunflower, etc.). Moreover, it's endlessly versatile!

I usually have a 1-pint mason jar sitting in a dark corner of my kitchen (to preserve the olive oil's health benefits) that I call my "base dressing." It contains all the usual ingredients: Oil, vinegar (in the classic French proportions of 3:1), salt, pepper and a clove of garlic to make it healthier, tastier and help keep it emulsified.

And then the fun begins: You can vary this dressing endlessly by siphoning off a ½ cup of basic dressing and blending it with herbs, lemon, fruits, etc., resulting in an exciting array of aromas and colors.

Makes about 1 pint of dressing

Base recipe:

½ cup white balsamic vinegar
1 clove garlic, finely minced (I use a Microplane grater)
1 tsp wholegrain mustard
½ tsp salt
several twists of black pepper from a pepper mill
1½ cups extra virgin olive oil

Combine vinegar, garlic and salt in a 1-pint mixing bowl or measuring jar, whisk with a wire whisk and set aside to let the salt dissolve and the garlic lose its pungent taste. Now slowly whisk in the olive oil until everything is amalgamated. Transfer to a clean glass bottle or mason jar and store in a dark, cool place. That's it!

If you want to mix things up a little, you can add flavorings. For each ½ cup of base dressing, use one of the following:

- ¼ cup fresh basil
- ¼ cup fresh grape tomatoes
- ¼ cup fresh raspberries & 2 tsp honey/sugar
- ¼ cup roasted red peppers strips
- 1 tsp lemon zest, 1 tsp lemon juice, 2 tsp honey/sugar and ¼ cup fresh dill

Pour ½ cup base dressing and added ingredient(s) into a small electric blender (e.g. Nutri Bullet, Ninja) and process until you have a smooth, creamy emulsion. The base dressing keeps for several weeks, but once you have added fresh flavorings, use it quickly (within 3 days max.) and store leftovers in the fridge.