

FRENCH SALAD DRESSING

Recipe from BOG member Laure, who kindly ran this workshop for people attending Growing Green on 13 May 2023

For a good French salad dressing, you need good ingredients. The quality of the ingredients will be very much reflected in the final product.

I use Coleman powder mustard, Lidl extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar (in glass bottles preferably), Himalayan pink salt which I ground myself and herbs from my garden. The rest varies but I like very much to buy other herbs, spices, seeds, etc... by the weight. I tend to use a very good shop in Moorland Road.

I only have olive oil in my kitchen as it is the only one which does not change its chemistry formula when heated and can last a long time in your cupboard as long as you keep it well closed after each use and away from the sunlight. It will become cloudy if too cold but it won't really affect the taste.

I always prepare my dressing in a bottle for convenience and taste. I usually prepare 5 or 6 bottles at once as I use it a lot. I recycle the dark bottles I bought the olive oil in as they are perfect for it but I also use other glass bottles I fancy.

So here are the ingredients you will need:

Salt, mustard (strong), garlic and herbs (preferably fresh), seeds, spices, vinegar and olive oil.

Herbs, seeds and spices are according to your taste. I love to put cumin seeds, chives and other herbs from my garden. I do not use pepper as I don't like it and it's carcinogen if used a lot for a long time.

If you cannot digest garlic, olive oil flavoured by adding some cloves in and leaving it to "brew" should not inconvenience you. You can also use this flavoured oil for cooking. Alternatively, you can use wild garlic foraged in spring as it is not part of the garlic family but of the asparagus one (Liliaceae. I got this info from a doctor). It freezes very well and I also prepared several bottle of olive oil with it every year. I do my own pesto with it too.

The way you mix the ingredients is very important.

First, pour in the bottle (75cl) the salt (I put a teaspoon of it but it is up to your taste and your health!).

Then add peeled garlic cloves according to taste. You can cut the cloves in halves, they will "brew" quicker. I usually put 2 or 3 depending on size.

Herbs, seeds and spices follow, according to taste.

It is now time for the mustard (once again according to taste. I put 2 heaped teaspoons of Coleman powder mustard in). Shake well so everything get mixed.

Add the vinegar, according to your taste once more. The lightest the vinegar the more you put. When I use Balsamic vinegar, I usually pour 1/7 of the bottle as it's quite strong. You can always add more later on if you find the dressing too weak. Same with other ingredients.

Shake well for a minute or two and repeat the shaking several times. The longer you wait for the vinegar to dissolve the mustard (powder or else) the better. I wait a good hour, sometime several. The vinegar is also going to release the taste of each ingredient and for that process to happen it needs time.

When you are happy with the mixture being well brewed, add the olive oil and leave a good gap at the top of the bottle so you can easily shake the dressing. It will need to be well shaken each time you want a serving. No need to keep it in the fridge but always away from light.