

Liberating Liberating Salads

**A Foodservice Guide to
Labor-Saving Salad Operations**

Salads have been around for centuries. Babylonians enjoyed greens sprinkled with oil and vinegar. England's King Henry IV preferred boiled new potatoes diced and tossed with sardines and herb dressing. Mary, Queen of Scots, enjoyed boiled celery root diced and tossed with lettuce, creamy mustard dressing, truffles, chervil and hard-cooked egg slices. French chefs made exotic salads from rose petals, marigolds, nasturtiums and violets. Americans, too, have begun to expand their salad horizons, thanks to innovative foodservice operators.

Today, fresh-is-better and light-is-healthier attitudes are influencing Americans' buying decisions. Few menu items have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, as have salads. From side dishes to center of the plate, from self-serve bars to pre-packaged items, salads are for any menu, any time. Consumers today enjoy salads as appetizers, side dishes, entrées or desserts. By tailoring salads to fit unique markets, successful foodservice operators everywhere have discovered all kinds of people eat all kinds of salads. To meet the demand, salad savvy operators will pull out all the stops to perfect their salad service.

The first step toward salad success is to refine labor costs. This document provides basic, and not-so-basic, information to "Liberating Salads" toward higher profits and increased sales.

Saladvantages

Health and nutrition – A two-cup salad of romaine lettuce, tomato, carrots, broccoli and one tablespoon of ranch-style dressing provides twice the daily recommended minimum requirement of vitamin A, one-third more than the minimum requirement for vitamin C and 10% of the total calcium requirements, 13% of the minimum requirement for iron and 5% of the recommended daily requirement for protein and 10 to 15% of total fat daily allowance and 2.7 grams of fiber. Salads have a very nutritious reputation – and with good reason.

Taste – Inventive ingredient combinations and a variety of commercial dressing flavors – regular and reduced calories – offer an endless palate of taste profiles.

Eye appeal – Colorful, contrasting shapes and crisp appearance make salads naturally attractive.

Pleasing mouth feel – The variety of textures found in a salad is rarely available in any other dish.

Cost efficient – Prepared but unused meats and vegetables can be used as ingredients; leftover salad ingredients can be used to prepare the next day's soups or other entrées. Such crossovers reduce waste and increase profit.

Flexible – Because all foods fit a salad scheme, salads can be tailored to seasonal food availability, quantity and price.

Versatile – Salads appeal to the young and old; men and women; meateaters and vegetarians; healthy-appetites and dieters.

Labor-efficient – Smart foodservice operators are finding labor-saving ways to meet customer demands for delicious salads without sacrificing quality.

Back-Of-The-House Logistics

A good kitchen design and proper equipment can make any operation labor efficient.

Kitchen Design

Key factors of a labor efficient kitchen are proximity to related areas and smooth traffic patterns for work flow.

A salad prep area may include a two- or three-compartment sink for cleaning food, a work table (refrigerated work tables maintain crispness), cutting machine and other automated equipment.

The work area should have tools in easy reach and be near a refrigerator. (Pass-through refrigeration units, connecting prep areas to point-of-use, reduce steps and employee fatigue and increase productivity.)

Labor-Saving Equipment

Proper equipment for salad preparation depends on the size of the operation. Basic salad tools include: measuring devices; portion and balance scales; stainless steel and wire utensils; can openers; shredders/graters; large colanders or wire baskets; and cutting boards. For salad bar ingredients, use stainless steel or crockery institutional containers to limit discoloration of vegetables. Aluminum may discolor food items. Enamel chips easily and may cause foreign particles in food. Have plenty of tongs, spoons (regular and

slotted), forks and ladles. Other aids are icemakers, disposal units and shrink-wrap machines. Labor-saving devices for salad-making include automatic slicers (some with counters), vertical cutter-mixers, utility carts.

Before investing in labor-saving equipment, evaluate the safety features, employee training required, and the time required to use and clean. (For instance, it can take longer to use and clean an electric cutting machine to chop a few onions than to chop by hand.) But easily sanitized or self-cleaning equipment can drastically reduce labor.

Product	By Hand	Power-Driven Food Cutter	Time Saved
Cabbage - 6 heads	30 min.	1 min.	29 min.
Celery - 6 lbs.	30 min.	1 min.	29 min.
Onions - 5 lbs.	40 min.	1 min.	39 min.

Less expensive hand-held tools can serve in several ways. For instance, an egg slicer works well for kiwi fruit. Tools are available which curl carrots or convert radishes to flowers. Hand-held tools fill in when power-driven machines are broken. Your equipment dealer will help you determine what is most appropriate for your operation.

The Proper Home for Produce

Healthy produce is essential for a delicious salad. There are three basic types of storage: dry/no refrigeration; dry/cool; and wet/cool. (The environment insider a cooler is generally dry and cold.)

Follow these general guidelines:

Storage:			
32° Ideal Temperature		40–55° Ideal Temperature	
Apples	Dry	Avocados	Dry
Artichokes	Dry	Cantaloupes	Dry
Asparagus	Moist	Cucumbers	Dry
Broccoli/Cauliflower	Moist	Lemons/Limes	Dry
Cabbage	Moist	Melons	Dry
Carrot/Celery	Moist	Onions	Dry
Grapes	Dry	Peppers	Dry
Lettuce	Dry	Pineapples	Dry
Mushrooms	Dry	Squash	Dry
Onions (Green)	Dry		
Oranges	Dry	60–65° Ideal Temperature	
Peaches/Pears/Plums	Dry	Bananas	Dry
Radishes	Moist	Tomatoes	Dry
Spinach	Moist	Watermelon	Dry
Strawberries	Dry		

Produce Storage Tips

Temperatures can vary drastically inside a cooler: warmer near the door, colder near the blower or adjoining freezer. The following tips apply:

- Mark the arrival date on produce boxes and rotate the older items in the cooler, putting new items behind them. First in, first out.
- Keep lettuce, leafy produce and mushrooms away from fans.
- Store citrus fruits away from strongly scented vegetables.

Special Handling Tips

- Clean sinks, counters, containers, utensils and equipment with a sanitizing solution (bleach water, etc.) several times daily.
- Remove salad ingredients only when ready for preparation.
- Cold (40° to 70°F) rinse fresh greens twice and drain before preparation to remove any substances added for protection during shipping.
- Recut ends of wilted greens and broccoli and submerge in water for 10 minutes. Remove and chill.

- Keep celery, carrots and cut vegetables fresh in ice water baths.
- Prevent sliced apples, avocados and bananas from browning by sprinkling with salt water or a solution of three parts water to one part citrus juice. (Several sulfite-free antioxidants are available.) Pineapple juice will not overwhelm flavor or color of fruits.
- Lemon juice added to broccoli and cauliflower keeps color bright while on salad bar.

State-Of-The-Art Salad Construction

Salads are made three basic ways:

- Made to order by kitchen staff upon customer order.
- Pre-packaged individually portioned before service time.
- Customer-made, usually at a salad bar.

Regardless of which salad type, good planning, accurate scheduling and thorough training will ensure success.

Made-To-Order – Salads made-to-order are often house specialties and/or entrée salads. Good presentation and consistent quality are keys to success. Inexpensive photography of special salads posted at a central work station will make salad preparation simple and presentation consistent. Finishing touches can be done by wait staff before delivering to customer tables. Ingredients and garnishes should be ready and waiting. Dressings can be added in the kitchen or at the table, depending on customer's preference. Be prepared to provide either dressing service.

Pre-Made, Pre-Packaged – Banquet service and large parties require salads be made in advance. An assembly line technique works best. Prepare all salad ingredients in advance, again including garnishes and dressings. Set up the numbers of plates needed in a large work area. Place the base (lettuce cup, tortilla shell, etc.) in serving dish then add the body of the salad. If salads are to be served immediately, drizzle on the dressing and place garnish. For later service, hold the dressing and garnishing. Keep prepared salad plates refrigerated until served.

Supermarkets, convenience stores and many fast food restaurants have entered the pre-packaged salad market. Whether prepared on-premises or in a central location elsewhere, pre-packaged salads require a fresh, palatable appearance. Since preparation is done in advance (often in large quantities), care must be taken to store salads properly – before and after they're plated.

Lettuce greens should be cleaned and prepped the day before and kept in plastic bags or covered stainless steel containers. One person can prepare enough ingredients and garnishes to serve 150 to 200 salads in approximately two to three hours. Time-saving equipment will speed this process along.

Custom-Made/Salad Bars – Foodservice operators, institutional and commercial, have developed state-of-the-art salad bars, which require no more time and labor than other salad operations. The steps are simple:

1. *Prepare the ingredients* – Follow the same procedure for preparing produce as for other salad types, putting ingredients directly in salad bar crocks. (Time required with a food processor: 5 minutes per pound of produce.)
2. *Stock the bar before service* – Place ice in salad bar unit, allowing space for ingredient crocks as you go. Have extra ingredients ready and refrigerated for fast replacement. (Time required: 1 to 5 minutes, depending on location of restock crocks.)
3. *Clean-up* – Includes measuring leftover ingredients to monitor inventory and determine cost; returning ingredients to cooler; drain ice and cleaning unit. (Time required: 45 minutes to 1 hour.)

Putting Leftovers To Work – Kitchen overage or leftovers that never made it to a customer's table, can go to work in salads. Extend leftovers by creating signature prepared salads.

- Combine leftover pasta with Thousand Island dressing, chopped celery, onions, hard-cooked eggs and sliced olives for a new pasta salad.
- Marinate leftover raw vegetables in a vinegar and oil or honey mustard dressing. Try this combination: broccoli, mushrooms and zucchini with diced pimientos and onions.
- Mix pre-cooked vegetables, such as leftover cauliflower, with dill weed and creamy cucumber or Caesar dressing.

- Toss leftover potatoes with ranch dressing, sliced green onions, olives, cucumbers and bacon bits for a distinctive potato salad.
- Make croutons from day-old bread by brushing Italian dressing on slices, cut in cubes and bake, or,
- Brush creamy peppercorn dressing on split Italian loaf and bake until golden brown.

Easy Garnishing – Garnishing is an essential tool in food presentation. With toothpicks and skewers, a small paring knife and an imaginative chef, a salad becomes a work of art. Try these quick ideas:

Fresh fruit (strawberries, pear, apple, grapes, avocado) thinly sliced and fanned;

Chunks of fresh and canned fruit on skewer for fruit kabobs;

A wheel of red and green plum slices with a cluster of champagne grapes in center;

Fruit salad sprinkled with grated citrus peels;

Lemon wedges dipped in paprika;

Snow peas arranged in a fan design;

Carrot sticks tied together with a green onion reed;

Whole cherry tomatoes, grapes, strawberries, olives, strategically placed.

Ingredients For Salad Acceptance And Profitability

Refining old and developing new processing techniques has given birth to a bevy of food products that save the foodservice operator time, labor and money. Salad ingredients are now available in many different forms.

Pre-Cut Primer

Increasing varieties of pre-cut and otherwise processed produce are on the foodservice market today. Value-added produce is available washed, cut and packaged by the grower or shipper. Fresh produce can be purchased washed, cut and partially cooked. Consider these benefits:

Reduced labor – Processed produce reduces prep time, freeing staff for more skilled tasks.

Convenient – The pre-portioned packaging eliminates guess work and allows for precise ordering, consistent yield and accurate preparation time for forecasting.

Longer shelf life – Improved packing and shipping techniques are reducing spoilage and dehydration, increasing shelf life.

Easy storage – Reduced weight of pre-cut produce lowers freight rates and can increase storage capacity 30%. (Example: 3 boxes of lettuce cleaned and cored = 5 boxes of unprocessed lettuce.)

Less waste – Processed produce provides no waste.

Safe – Processed produce reduces chance of equipment injury.

Here are some produce items that available pre-cut:

ITEMS	CUTS AVAILABLE	YIELD	HANDLING TIPS
Broccoli	Florettes	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store at 32° – 35°. • Keep moist by adding ice regularly. Dry broccoli is highly perishable.
	Spears	100%	
Carrots	Shredded	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store at 34° moist. • Keep in plastic bags. • Refresh dry or chalky julienne strips with ice water rinse.
	Julienne	100%	
	Sticks, straight or crinkle cut	100%	
	Coins	100%	
Celery	Dice	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store at 34° in plastic bags. • Keep moist on ice. • Dehydrated celery requires trimming.
	Sticks	100%	
	Crescent cut	100%	
Iceberg Lettuce	Shredded in various widths	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store at 34°. • Store in original bag. • Keep unused portion in immediately closed bags. • Refresh dry or wilted lettuce with ice water rinse.
	Chopped	100%	
	Salad mix w/ carrots & cabbage	100%	
	Cleaned & trimmed heads	97%	
	Cleaned & cored heads	95%	

Pre-cut cauliflower florettes, pineapple (wedges, spears and tidbits), sliced cucumbers, peppers, radishes, onions are also available. Custom blends can be packaged.

Frozen Food Fundamentals

Improved processing techniques are yielding frozen foods with better flavor, color, texture, nutritional value and more exciting varieties and blends. Processed within hours of harvest, frozen vegetables are available in 8 to 16-ounce solid packs and 12 to 40-ounce polybags. Varying USDA grade standards are available, though most foodservice products are Grade A fancy.

There's no question that frozen foods offer convenience. They can be thawed or quick-steamed for use in salads or as fresh items on a salad bar for greater variety and reduced labor costs.

Frozen fruits and vegetables must be stored at 0°F or colder. After thawing, treat them as highly perishable. To retain firmness, do not overcook vegetables. Many vegetables can be frozen for up to a year. Here are more frozen food advantages:

Reduced labor and prep time – They're already cleaned, peeled, chopped, sliced or diced, leaving little waste.

Consistent quality – Most frozen vegetables are steam blanched before freezing to seal nutrients and provide crisp-tender texture, further reducing final prep

Canned Confidence

As with frozen food technology, canned food processing has come a long way since it was developed more than a century ago. Canneries are strategically located near growing areas, and harvests are timed so foods may be canned in their prime – less than an average six hours lapse between the time food is picked and sealed in cans. This assures that foods retain their nutrients.

Canned vegetables are cleaned, peeled and chopped, sliced or diced and pre-cooked during heat processing. (One manufacturer has developed a process, which allows canning of heat-sensitive products, such as cauliflower and melon balls.) Hundreds of foods are available year-round in No. 10 cans. They require no refrigeration or freezer space and can be stacked and stored for long periods of time. Most canned vegetables are available in Fancy, Extra Standard or Standard USDA grades. Other good reasons for using canned foods:

Labor savings – Frees skilled personnel for other tasks. Ready-to-eat garnishes and easy salad bar extenders. For example: chilled canned kidney beans, wax beans, beets, mushrooms, carrots, bell peppers, jalapeno peppers, pimientos, garbanzo beans, artichoke hearts, bean sprouts, bamboo shoots and water chestnuts. Canned fruits also work well on salad bars: peaches, pears, plums, apricots, fruit cocktail, pineapple, cherries, blackberries and more.

Less waste – No processing required – 100% yield.

Convenient – Standardized can sizes make purchasing simple and allow accurate cost-per-serving calculations.

Consistent quality – One “cutting” confirms the quality of an entire shipment.

Quick Canned Combos

Lima Bean Salad – Combine canned, drained lima beans and water chestnuts with chopped onion, sour cream and mayonnaise mixed with dry Italian salad dressing mix. Garnish with bacon bits.

Vegetable Medley – Combine drained, canned French-cut green beans, tiny peas, Chinese vegetables and water chestnuts with thinly sliced celery and onions. Coat with Russian dressing spiked with soy sauce.

Tropical Treat – Combine drained, canned tropical fruit salad (or fruit cocktail) with sliced banana and equal parts of blue cheese dressing and whipped dessert topping.

Pre-mixed Ingredients And Fully Prepared Salads

Many manufacturers have taken the salad and salad bar concept a step further in convenience by packaging partially and fully cooked vegetables and vegetable-pasta or -rice blends. Some varieties are pre-cooked, quick-frozen. One manufacturer has developed a quick-blanch process, which extends a fresh mushroom's refrigerated shelf life to three months (two weeks once opened). A quick-blanch mushroom has very similar flavor, color and texture to the fresh product.

"Wet Salads" are fully prepared and ready to serve. There are refrigerated potato and pasta salads, even canned varieties of marinated vegetable salads. A growing category of fresh, prepared refrigerated foods provide exciting new "kitchen-less" options for labor-conscious foodservice operators. As processing, packaging and distribution technologies continue, more options will open.

Fast Formulas For Dressing Success

A unique house dressing can set your operation apart. In fact, most commercial operations offering a house dressing report it's the most popular flavor.

If you're looking for a signature dressing, many dressing suppliers can formulate a special blend exclusive to your restaurant. Or, consider mixing two or more commercial dressings and sauces yourself. Exercise creativity. Experiment. By offering a variety of dressings, you keep the interest of repeat patrons.

Here are some simple formulas and suggested applications:

Green Salad

To 1 quart (4 cups) mayonnaise or salad dressing, add 1 1/3 cups drained shredded cucumber and ½ cup each of chopped parsley and horseradish.

To four parts blue cheese dressing, add one part French dressing.

To 1 gallon French or Italian, add ½ cup Worcestershire sauce.

To four parts mayonnaise, add two parts Italian dressing, one part shredded Parmesan cheese.

Combine 1 gallon mayonnaise or salad dressing with 1 quart salsa and 2 teaspoons hot red pepper sauce for a Mexicali dressing.

Potato Salad

To two parts mayonnaise or salad dressing, add one part sour cream and chopped green onions.

Cabbage Salad

Mix equal parts French and cole slaw dressings.

To six parts cole slaw dressing, add one part cubed Swiss cheese.

Pasta Salad

Combine 2 cups mayonnaise or salad dressing with 3 ounces fresh basil leaves, 1 tablespoon pine nuts and 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese in food processor for easy pesto.

Combine equal parts of mayonnaise and Italian dressing.

Spinach Salad

To eight parts Russian dressing, add four parts French dressing, one part soy sauce.

Fruit Salad

To two parts mayonnaise, add one part red French dressing.

To four parts blue cheese dressing, add one part French dressing.

To one part poppy seed dressing, add two parts sour cream and spice with equal parts grated orange rind and minced mint.

Seafood Salad

To two parts mayonnaise, add one part cocktail sauce.

To 3 cups blue cheese dressing, add ¼ cup dill weed.

Crab Salad

To 12 parts mayonnaise, add three parts catsup, two parts sherry and one part Worcestershire sauce.

Chef's Salad

Mix equal parts Russian and Italian dressings.

Tuna Salad

To 1 gallon blue cheese or Thousand Island dressing, add 2/3 cup Worcestershire sauce.

Molded Vegetable Salad

To four parts Thousand Island dressing, add one part blue cheese dressing.

Promoting Your Salads

Once you've developed a labor-efficient salad operation, don't forget the final step to success – promoting your efforts. If you can have a house specialty salad on a customer's table faster than any other menu item, tell them.

If your salads are made fresh everyday, promote it. Do this through table tents, menu signage, salad bar banners and an enthusiastic wait staff. Many

commodity groups offers, at little or no cost, collateral material for salad promotion. The possibilities are endless and the profit-potential staggering.

Double-Duty Dressings

In addition to salads, commercial dressings and sauces can provide labor-savings in many other phases of your operation. Artfully applied, these “seasonings in a bottle” work labor-saving magic across the menu, from appetizer to dessert.

Appetizers

- Combine one part mayonnaise or salad dressing to one part shredded Cheddar cheese. Simmer over low heat until melted and serve with real bacon bits over hot cottage fries or as a dip for French Fries.
- Marinate halved sea scallops or surimi in Italian dressing for several

Salads

- Halve a firm, unpeeled avocado and remove pit. Serve on lettuce leaves with a dollop of creamy dressing in center, garnished with pimiento strips.
- Toss canned, drained mixed vegetables with any sour cream dressing and chopped chives. Chill and serve in lettuce cups or on tomato slices.
- Marinate canned vegetables (mushrooms, carrots, beets, artichoke hearts, asparagus and/or green beans) in Italian dressing.

Side Dishes

- Spread creamy garlic dressing and minced parsley on French bread halves. Wrap in foil and bake.
- Stir-fry fresh vegetables in Italian dressing to crisp-tender. Sprinkle with grated cheese.
- Boil tiny new potatoes with skins on. Drain and toss with Russian dressing and minced onion.
- Flavor corn-on-the-cob, sliced carrots, peas or new potatoes with horseradish butter: ½ cup soft butter or margarine, 1 tablespoon mustard, 2 teaspoons prepared horseradish, salt and pepper to taste.

Entrées

- Dip chicken pieces in blue cheese or creamy dressing. Sprinkle with breadcrumbs and bake.
- Marinate meats in pourable dressings – Italian, Russian, Caesar, French or red wine and vinegar (allowing ½ cup per pound) for at least three hours in the refrigerator, then broil. Brush with marinade while broiling for extra flavor.
- Marinate white fish fillets in mixture of Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Dip in breadcrumbs and bake at 500°F until done.
- Glaze corned beef brisket with one part prepared horseradish, one part Worcestershire, four parts orange marmalade and four parts Dijon-style mustard.

Desserts

- Mix mayonnaise with sherbet as a creamy topping for canned fruit chunks.
- Make quick ambrosia with fresh, frozen or canned fruit added to one part chopped nuts, one part flaked coconut, two parts Russian dressing, four parts plain yogurt.
- Mix equal parts salad dressing and lemon yogurt and serve over watermelon balls and assorted fresh fruit.