



THE POWER OF PLANTS:

Adventures in Plant-Based Nutrition



By Emma Levez Larocque, RHN

Perfecting the craft of meal salads



Summer is a great time to lighten up your menu, and to get into the habit of creating meal salads as a regular part of your week. If you are able to hone and perfect the art of meal salads over the summer months, you just may find that it becomes a practice that you carry into the fall and winter months because you love it so much! Salads can change and adapt to every season of the year, providing cool meals in the hot months and warming meals in the cooler months; but there are two keys to making meal salads part of your regular routine: 1) knowing how to change them up daily so you don't get bored, and 2) knowing how to make them truly satisfying, so you're not walking away from the dinner table thinking to yourself, ok...I just had salad for dinner – what's next? Feeling satisfied after eating a meal salad is the ultimate sign of success, no matter the time of year, and it's not as hard as you may think!

Here are some tips to help you on your way:

1. Make it complete. When creating a meal salad (i.e. a salad that will serve as your whole meal), be sure to include elements from all the food groups so that you get a complete nutritional profile, and feel satisfied and full after you have eaten. This means (for one person):

- One generous layer of greens (kale, chard, spinach, mixed greens, etc)
- 1/2 – 3/4 cup grain (rice, millet, quinoa, barley, etc)
- 1/2 – 1 cup other roasted/steamed/raw vegetables (carrots, beets, bell peppers, jicama, cabbage, squash, radishes, etc)
- 1/2 cup beans or legumes or marinated tofu/tempeh
- Small handful of nuts/seeds
- Handful of dried fruit or 1/2 cup of fresh berries/other fruit
- Fresh herbs (optional)
- A drizzle of dressing (if necessary – with all that flavour, you may not need it!)

2. Let color guide you. Choose a dominant colour scheme for your salad, and stick to it. So, if you choose purple and green, you can include things like purple cabbage, cranberries, celery, jicama, roasted Brussels sprouts, pumpkin seeds, greens of choice, etc. Switch up your colour scheme every time you make a salad to ensure that you are “eating the rainbow” (which means you will be getting a wide variety of nutrients since different colors represent different nutritional properties... isn't Mother Nature amazing?!) Thinking about the color also makes this process into something creative...a beautiful salad is much more enticing to eat.

3. Include cooked and raw veg. This is particularly important on those days you want something warm and comforting – including some roasted/steamed veg takes the meal salad to a whole other level, making it feel more substantial, and switching up the texture and flavor too.

4. Make it big! Don't be afraid to make your salads big, bold and beautiful! Take the biggest plate you've got and load it up! At the end of eating a massive plate of salad, you're going to feel satisfied and energized, and your body will thank you for all that good nutrition. If you're extra hungry, add a few extra nuts, avocado or beans/tofu/tempeh. If you have a spiralizer, this is a fun way to bring height and lift to your plate. Beets, carrots and cucumbers are my favorite things to spiralize.

5. Individualize it. I find the best way to make beautifully presented salads is to make them plate by plate. Put out a variety of ingredients and get everyone in your family to make their own – this way people can individualize according to likes and dislikes as well.

6. Don't skip the plant protein. I have said it already, but this is a very important part of making a satisfying meal salad because beans and legumes are full of fibre and plant protein that will really help you to feel satisfied and full. Experiment with different ways to prepare your beans – you may love them right out of the can/pressure cooker, just rinsed. Or maybe you want to toss them with a bit of olive oil, salt and pepper and roast them. Making a flavourful marinade for tempeh and tofu and then roasting them is an amazing way to bring a powerful flavour punch to your salad.



7. Include lots of flavors, but make sure they are complimentary. In other words, don't just throw EVERYTHING in there, or you might end up with something that looks and tastes a bit like a mish-mash – not so appealing. Think of this as a design project. The element of color, mentioned previously will help to guide you, as will thinking about the strong flavours you are including. This mostly applies if you are including a marinade for the tofu/tempeh, dried fruit or fresh herbs, and dressing. Make sure these flavors are complimentary...for example,

if you are making the orange-maple tempeh below, you might want to include fresh orange pieces in your salad.

Finally, avoid getting stuck in a rut! Summer is the perfect time to experiment with salads because there is so much great produce around. Use these general guidelines and let your creative juices flow! Try to get into the habit of including meal salads a few times a week and you will soon find yourself an expert at this! As the weather starts to cool down, remember you can keep this up, just adding more cooked vegetables to make a warming meal.



Emma Levez Larocque is a Registered Holistic Nutritionist and a Certified Plant-Based Chef. She has been vegan for 7 years, and veg for more than 20. She is passionate about sharing the benefits of plant-based eating and living with others, and working to make the planet a kinder, more compassionate place for all who share it.

Emma's Orange- Maple Meal Salad

By Emma Levez Larocque

INGREDIENTS

- A bed of mixed lettuce
- Roasted butternut squash
 - sliced thin, tossed in olive oil, salt and pepper, roasted at 400F for about 10 minutes, flipped after 5 minutes
- Spiralized cucumber
- Shredded carrots
- Cooked quinoa
- Roasted beets (same method as for squash – you can do these on the same baking sheet)
- Pecans (raw or lightly toasted)
- Hemp hearts
- Dried cranberries
- Maple-orange tempeh
 - Cut 1 cake of tempeh into strips/triangles or cubes and pan fry them in ½-1



tblsp of olive oil until crispy. Mix together the juice of 2 oranges (about ½ cup), minced orange zest from 1 orange, 2 tblsp soy sauce and 2 tblsp maple syrup (taste and adjust if necessary). Pour the mixture over the cooking tempeh, letting it simmer until liquid has been absorbed. Remove from heat, and serve hot/warm.

Balsamic reduction

Bring 1 cup of good quality balsamic vinegar to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 20-25 minutes, until volume has reduced to about 1/3 of a cup and the reduction tastes sweet. Remove from heat and pour into a small cup for cooling. This will thicken substantially as it cools and will be like a syrup when completely cooled.

Lay out the bed of lettuce, and surround the plate with roasted squash and spiralized cucumber. Spoon on cooked quinoa, and place roasted beets into quinoa, spaced evenly. Top with shredded carrots, pecans, maple-orange tempeh, cranberries and hemp hearts. Drizzle with balsamic reduction.