



Eat This

Meal Salads & Whole Food Dressings

Renee Tougas

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Dedication

Thanks Damien for leading our family on the food path less traveled. I know your health journey has not been an easy one but in finding answers for yourself you've improved our whole family's health and well being. And thanks also for eating, with gratitude, every weird and "I didn't exactly follow the recipe" meal I've ever cooked for you.

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Introduction



It was a few years ago when my husband Damien first proposed to me that we eat a large green salad, as a meal, on a regular basis.

Damien has proposed a lot of crazy ideas to me over the years. And at first glance this seemed like one of those. **How**

exactly does a green salad make a meal?

You might be wondering the same thing. So here's the secret: it's not simply a green salad. It's a salad full of leafy greens, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds. It's a real meal. A meal sized salad.

Over the course of the last four years or so, we have slowly added a lunchtime meal sized salad to our daily diet.

In this e-book I tell the story how we made the change from sandwiches to salads. I teach you the principles of building meal sized salads in your own kitchen. And most importantly (because what's a food book without recipes!), I share our family's favorite, tried and true dressing recipes that will make your salads both super nutritious and delicious.

Salads, Not Sandwiches - Our Story



When Damien first suggested that we add meal sized salads to our diet, I was resistant. (I'm routinely resistant to all new ideas.) The only meal salads I was familiar with were loaded with meat, cheese and heavy dairy dressings. Since our diet focuses on plant foods, and we don't regularly eat animal

products, I was naturally skeptical.

I just couldn't see how plant-based salads, as a meal, would satisfy our healthy appetites. Because of my skepticism, Damien initiated this dietary change on his own at first. He started packing meal sized salads for his lunch.

Before I knew it I was helping him in the kitchen, willingly, during the early morning hours. Washing lettuce and chopping extra veggies. I learned that meal sized salads aren't just lettuce, cucumber and carrots. **They can be chock full of plant food ingredients - beans, nuts, seeds and vegetables - that leave you satisfied and energized.**

It was only a matter of time before I started washing extra lettuce and chopping more vegetables. And in that way our whole family started to incorporate a large salad as our regular lunchtime meal.

Since that time there have been seasons, usually the winter months, where we mix up the menu a bit. We'll eat soup, stir fries, and sometimes beans and grains on really cold days. We don't eat meal sized salads for lunch every single day. Our weekends have a different rhythm with a different menu and we go through seasons where we want a change. But for the last year, even through the winter, we've eaten salads for lunch more days of the week than not.

Our bodies love the nutrition of whole food salads and seem to call out for it in our diet. **Our children love to eat these salads, and so do we adults.** I feel different after eating a large salad for lunch than I do after eating a sandwich or even grains and beans - lighter and more energetic, yet very satisfied.

We are happy salad eaters and I want to share some of the secrets of our success with you.

There are a couple things that have made eating meal sized salads for lunch more doable for our family. At the very least, they have made the transition easier.

This is my story and if the following doesn't apply to you that doesn't mean eating large salads is out of the question for you. I just tell this to explain how we got to this place of salads, not sandwiches.

A Home Based Family

We are a homeschooling family so we are home during the day, and not packing school lunches. Packing a large salad for a school-going child might be difficult. In that case I would recommend incorporating large salads (and I mean really big - the salad is the main dish, not the side dish) into your supper menu.

In addition, for the last year my husband and I have been working at home together. Admittedly, this makes our lunch meal preparation and eating easier but my husband had been taking salads to work with him for years before he came home to work. In those days his lunch looked like this:



Being home together makes lunchtime salad eating very feasible for our family. **If you are not in this position you can still incorporate more raw greens and vegetables into your diet at other points in the day.** I offer alternatives and creative ideas in the [Challenges](#) chapter.

Gluten Intolerances

We have gluten intolerances and sensitivities in our family. Over the years various members of our crew have “gone off” gluten for periods of time to heal skin rashes and digestive discomfort. We found these symptoms were linked to what we were eating, specifically corn and wheat (and to a lesser extent gluten in general).

Years ago, Damien largely removed wheat from his diet altogether. This affected our whole family’s diet. Gluten sensitivities are often genetic and indeed our children have had long periods of time where they didn’t eat gluten because of the reactions we observed in their bodies.

We are an “eat together” family. I prepare one meal for the whole gang. I don’t make separate foods for picky eaters and I didn’t want to be preparing gluten-free additions to our regular meals for my husband to eat. So we dropped wheat from our family’s regular menu. The kids and I will still eat wheat occasionally - a bakery treat for example, and I love a good deli-style sandwich from time to time - but I don’t cook or serve wheat for our family meals, which includes lunch.

At first this was a big adjustment for me. In the early years of our marriage and family life I spent a lot of time learning to bake 100% whole wheat bread. This bread was a staple ingredient in many meals, especially lunch.

When we removed this bread from our diet I had to think differently about snacks and lunch meals. Easy sandwiches and wraps were no longer an option. This was years ago when there still wasn’t a lot of gluten-free products and the bread equivalents were undesirable, not to mention expensive (cost is still an issue with gluten-free products).



Instead of switching to gluten-free bread sandwiches we re-designed our lunch menu to include leftovers, brown rice pasta, easy grain and bean based meals and stir fries.

This worked for a time but as our kids started to eat adult sized supper portions, leftovers

became scarce. I had to prepare complete lunch meals from scratch each day. So when Damien starting eating meal sized salads for his lunch the timing was right for me to change our menu. **If I had to prepare a meal any way why not make a really healthy and delicious salad?**

Making a Meal Sized Salad

So what is a meal sized salad? How do you turn a bunch of lettuce into a filling meal?
How on earth were greens and raw veggies going to fill us up?

A meal sized salad is more than greens and raw veggies.

Meal salads are seriously the size of the meal, in our case they fill a large dinner plate, and they include several elements.

1. Greens
2. Vegetable & Fruit "Toppings"
3. Seed & Nut "Toppings"
4. Beans
5. Dressing



Greens



The base of our salad is leafy greens. We are fairly basic in our tastes and usually use green leaf or romaine lettuce, simply because that is most economical in our area and also the kids like it. If iceberg lettuce is on sale we'll use that also. When other greens are in season - from the garden, farm

share, or farmer's market - we'll use those. You could also use spinach.

Vegetable & Fruit "Toppings"



On top of the leafy green base we add any number of raw vegetables and fruits.

- The usual suspects - tomatoes, peppers, cucumber, celery, red or green onion, and

avocados (an excellent source of fat, which I will be discussing in the [dressing section](#)).

- Sprouts - store-bought, or better yet, the ones you grow yourself. The blog *Real Food Matters* has an [excellent sprouting tutorial](#) if you'd like to grow your own.
- Dried fruits - cranberries, cherries, raisins, etc. My favorite dried fruit on salads is cranberries.
- Grated root veggies - carrots, beets, spring radishes (chopped), young turnips, and if you're adventurous, jicama. Don't be afraid to experiment with those farmer's market vegetables.
- Cruciferous veggies - broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, bok choy and others. Cruciferous vegetables are an amazing source of cancer fighting antioxidants and phytochemicals. These can be added to salads, raw or slightly cooked.
- Zesty greens and herbs - endive, arugula, chopped basil leaves, and fresh parsley, to name a few. We add these seasonally.
- Fresh fruits - apple, mandarin orange, pear, etc. Our family doesn't usually like fruit on our salad but some people do.
- Mushrooms aren't a fruit or vegetable but I include them here. Mushrooms are incredibly healthy and sliced "button" mushrooms make a nice salad addition.

We don't mix all of these together on every salad we eat. Some of our meal sized salads are very basic, especially when I'm pressed for time. And others, are more adventurous.

This is simply a list of ideas to help you stock your fridge, so when you start to prepare your salad you have a variety of ingredients on hand to inspire you.

Once you start stocking your fridge for meal sized salad eating, your green grocer, or favorite farmer's market seller is going to *love* you!

Don't be shy with your salad toppings; this is where you can express a lot of creativity and add great taste and texture to your salads. When you're just getting started you'll want to stick with veggies your family likes, but as everyone gets used to eating large salads, try new things.

Seed & Nut "Toppings"



Your imagination is your only limit here. Our favorite seed topping is toasted sunflower seeds with a squirt of Braggs. The "recipe" is included with the [dressing recipes](#).

Sunflower seeds are inexpensive and readily available. Other tasty nut

toppings are raw almonds and walnuts or toasted cashews. Yum. Our dressings feature nuts so we don't use them very much on the actual salad.

Beans



Beans are what make your salad a filling meal. Raw vegetables are an amazing source of health promoting goodness but you'd have to eat an enormous amount of lettuce and veggies to satisfy your body's caloric needs.

The macronutrients that give us energy are proteins, carbohydrates and fats. These have to be a part of your meal sized salad to feel like you've eaten a meal (and so your kids aren't asking for a snack in less than half an hour).

Beans provide protein and carbohydrate (and small amounts of fat). But unlike animal sources of protein they also have amazing health promoting qualities, not the least of which is lots of fiber, which is extremely important for good health. As a plant food, they are loaded with nutrients. Beans are a win-win-win.

We add heaping portions (about one cup for the adults and less for the kids) of beans and lentils to our salads. Some of our favorites are chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans, and brown lentils. Red lentils cook up into a mush that isn't pleasant on salad. There are lots of bean varieties you can try.

Cooking Beans From Scratch



I recommend cooking your own beans, from scratch, instead of using canned beans. But if you're just getting started with all this, and the thought of cooking beans and preparing salad seems like just too much, then use canned beans! Look for brands without added ingredients.

Cooking dried beans is really easy and it's super cheap. Eating lots of beans is one of the ways we economize in our kitchen where the produce bill is rather high.

There are a lot of bean cooking tutorials online. Here's one I found that explains the process well: [How to Cook Dried Beans](#).

Here is my basic procedure for cooking dried beans.

1. Soak dried beans overnight in at least double the amount of water, as they will expand. Place the bowl or pot of soaking beans on the counter top. They do not need to be covered.
2. The next day - drain, rinse thoroughly, cover again with lots of water and cook. See the link above for more detailed instructions on bean cooking times.

If the beans will be sitting in water for more than eight hours (e.g., I've soaked the beans overnight but won't cook them till the afternoon), I'll drain, rinse and soak in fresh water till I'm ready to cook them. I always drain and thoroughly rinse the soaking water from the beans before cooking them.

Digesting Beans

Our family has been eating beans, every day, for years. Beans do not give us digestive issues. I think most of the digestibility issues with beans (i.e., flatulence and discomfort) comes in the transition stages when your body is adjusting to the increased fiber.

However, some people continue to struggle with bean digestibility even after a transition period.

There are ways to make beans more digestible.

1. **Add kombu to the cooking water.** Kombu is a sea vegetable. If you put some in the bean cooking water it will help soften the beans for easier chewing and digesting. It will also add important minerals - iodine, calcium, magnesium and iron - to your diet.
2. **Introduce beans slowly and chew well.** If you are unaccustomed to eating beans, add them to your diet slowly, to give your body time to adjust. All food should be chewed really well but with beans especially it will help you digest them better.
3. **Soak for an extended period of time and/or sprout your beans.** Instead of soaking overnight, you soak for a longer period of time; draining and rinsing at regular intervals.

This last technique can be especially helpful for digesting beans. I don't have experience with this so I've asked Jennifer Sanders of the blog [Kidoing](#) to share her wisdom on this subject.

Extended Soaking and Sprouting Beans

By Jennifer Sanders, [Kidoing](#)

While I've eaten beans since childhood, I never had them regularly. They'd appear in chili (and many times I picked over them as a kid) or in the black bean soup I started eating as a young adult.

However, after changing to a plant-based diet almost three years ago, we now eat beans once a day in some form or another.

We've seen great improvements in our health due to modifying our diet. Yet, when eating beans, I have experienced severe stomach discomfort including indigestion with lots of bloating, pain and gas (not fun to go through, but I had to have my beans!).

To rectify this situation, I started reading about how to make beans more easily digestible and learned a few things.

1. Soaking beans leaves behind the oligosaccharides, or complex sugars, which may cause stomach distress. So, I soaked all my beans overnight, changing the water and soaking for a few more hours before cooking them.
2. I added some kombu (dried sea vegetable) to the cooking water.

3. I tried a supplement called “Say Yes to Beans” (what a cute name).

While all of these things may have helped, none of these was the total solution.

The solution that works best for me is soaking and sprouting my beans.

The process of soaking and sprouting is not hard, nor is it time consuming. It just takes a little advanced planning.

I use a sprouting jar that I got at a local health food store for \$5. There are other methods including using a sprouting bag, tray, or an electric sprouter that takes little effort, but costs much more.

Here is the procedure I use:

Day One



1. Measure and pour dried beans into a colander. Pick out any stones and poorly-shaped or off-colored beans.
2. Rinse with cold filtered water and pour the beans into the sprouting jar.
3. Fill the sprouting jar with cold filtered water. You want to make sure you have several inches of water covering the beans as they will expand overnight. Let the sprouting jar sit overnight with the mesh cover on.

Day Two



1. In the morning, pour the water out of the jar and add new water just to cover the beans. Swish the water around and drain it out of the jar. Find a place in your home that is not too drafty that will allow you to rest the jar upside down at an angle. You want to drain all the excess water from the jar and still allow airflow into the jar. (Make sure you put the jar on cloth to absorb any water draining from the jar.)
2. Rinse and drain one to two more times this first sprouting day (Day Two). I do it at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Or, it's fine to do it in the morning and evening if you're not home in the middle of the day.
3. Let sit overnight (still draining from the last rinse) and repeat again the next day, the second sprouting day (Day Three). You should begin to see the beans swell slightly at one end, then the sprouts will emerge.

Days Three & Four

At this point, you are just repeating the rinsing and draining process until you see sprouts on at least half of your beans. The entire process usually takes me three days of sprouting (not including that initial night of soaking). It's ok if all of the beans don't sprout. It's highly



likely that all have begun to germinate, even if there is no sprout emerging.

After you are satisfied with your sprouted beans, rinse and drain them one last time.

Transfer to your cooking pot (I still add kombu) and cook until done to your liking.

The soaked and sprouted beans will take less time to cook than usual. As an example, I usually cook sprouted chickpeas about 30-40 minutes since we like them on the softer side. Chickpeas that haven't been sprouted normally take about an hour and a half to cook.

At this point they are ready to go. They can be added to your meal sized salad, soups, stews and stir fries. Or they can be blended into a bean dip such as hummus.

Notes

- While the beans are sprouting, you may notice a slightly stronger odor coming from the jar. This is ok. It's part of the fermentation process. What you do not want to smell or see is mold. For this reason it is very important to make sure there is enough airflow to the jar. Once the beans are cooked and added to the recipe, you should not be able to detect any off flavors.
- You may eat the chickpeas raw after they have been sprouted. I prefer them cooked.

Dressing



Salad dressings are a key part of the meal sized salad. This is where you add the fat which both enhances the flavor and helps meet your body's nutritional needs. Like beans, fat in your dressing will help "fill you up" when you eat a salad. You can also add avocados, either in dressing or

chopped fresh on top of your greens for a nutritionally excellent and tasty source of fat.

Dressings are not an afterthought; they are just as important in the preparation and enjoyment of our salads.

The dressings in this book are ones that I've tweaked, "trial-ed" and tested on my willing subjects - my family. I've developed them with four primary considerations in mind.

Healthfulness

The main consideration in our eating and food preparation is health. Granted, not everything we cook and eat is the healthiest it could be. That's ok. We have a 90/10 rule.

We strive for 90 percent of our diet to be derived from nutrient-rich, plant-based foods. That gives us 10 percent wiggle room for the less nutritious stuff. I don't want to use this 10

percent on our salad dressings (we'd rather save this for eating out, special occasion meals, and treats). **Because salads are such an integral part to our daily diet the dressings need to be prepared with super nutritious, healthy ingredients.**

Taste



Healthy food is fine and dandy but it's gotta taste good if my family is going to love it. Which I want them to - love it, that is. Taste is very subjective though and it's also an acquired thing. We have a pretty clean diet so natural plant foods taste good to us. If you are new to plant foods you

may need to give your body time to adjust before the taste in these recipes really comes alive for you.

Whole Fat

These are whole fat recipes. This is what sets these dressing recipes apart from most other recipes you'll find.

Fats are incredibly important in our diet but there is a lot of evidence (please see books in [Resources](#)) that *refined fats, like all refined foods, are detrimental to our health*. Refined fats are especially detrimental because they are so calorically dense without all the protective nutrient qualities found in the *whole* plant food.

When you eat refined fats it's easy to consume too many calories but still be nutritionally deficient. This sends signals to your body to eat more food, when in fact what you really need is more nutrients, not more calories. For this reason, we've chosen to minimize refined oils in our diet and we consider them part of the 10 percent wiggle room.

Whole fat plant foods, such as nuts and seeds, are excellent sources of both micronutrients and fat. The dressings in this e-book feature these nutrient powerhouse ingredients.

You will notice a few of my recipes call for a small amount of toasted sesame oil. This is for the unique flavor of this oil, and does not add significant refined fat calories to the dressing.

Availability of Ingredients

This last point has become more important to me over the past year. We've moved a lot in the past fourteen months. We've lived in Maine, USA, Maritime Canada, the big city of Montréal and now our home in rural Québec. The ingredients I use in these recipes have been easily accessible in all these places.

I have spent a lot of time developing these recipes but I encourage you to adjust and tweak them to your own tastes.

Dressing Notes

Quantities



These recipes will prepare approximately 2 1/4 – 2 1/2 cups of dressing. We are a family of five and this is the amount of dressing we use for one meal. If you are serving smaller salad portions you can keep extra dressing in the fridge. The dressing will keep for at least five days. I've never

tried keeping it longer as we always use it up within a few days.

If the dressing is kept for a couple days in the fridge the water will separate from the fat in the nuts and seeds. Just shake it up and it's as good as new.

Kitchen Tools

A blender is used to make all of these recipes, except the miso soup and toasted seeds.

You do not need a fancy, high powered blender; any basic blender will work. *I've designed these recipes for ease of use and accessibility in any kitchen.*

If you have a high powered blender, such as a Vita-Mix, you do not need to mince garlic before adding to blender canister. All ingredients can go in whole, except citrus juices (see [next point](#)).

Not necessary, but helpful in washing lots of lettuce, is a salad spinner. If you don't have one you can spin washed lettuce in a dishtowel, cloth bag or clean pillow case. You can see this in action [in this video post](#) at my blog.

Juicing Citrus Fruits



All my recipes use fresh lemon and lime juice for a very simple reason - I can't find preservative-free lemon and lime juice where I currently live. Bottled juices will work, and I give the measurements if you're using them. A few brands I have used and recommend are [Santa Cruz](#),

[Lakewood](#) and [Volcano](#).

To juice my citrus fruits I use a very basic juicing tool. Nothing fancy.

To release the most juice from your fruit keep lemons and limes at room temperature (store extras in the fridge and bring out as needed). Another trick is to roll the lemon or lime

against the edge of the counter to break up the membranes for easier juicing. I do this to extract as much juice as possible when I squeeze it. *The art of hand juicing!*

Nut and Seed Butters and Milks

My recipes make liberal use of nut and seed butters and milks. In every case, I am using homemade, unsweetened soy or almond milk (except for the recipe calling for coconut milk). You can substitute store-bought nut and soy milk but make sure to use plain, unsweetened varieties. Here is a tutorial link for making your own nut butters and almond milk: [Almond Milk and Almond Butter](#)

Glossary of Ingredients



The dressing recipe ingredients are fairly straightforward but there are a few things I want to explain.

You should be able to find all of these ingredients in the most basic of health food stores (i.e., you don't need a Whole Foods Market™ in your

neighborhood to make these dressings). In addition, most of these ingredients are also available in regular grocery stores.

Nutritional yeast – Read all about it here at [What The Heck is Nutritional Yeast](#) by the amazing blogger and food photographer Susan Voisin from *Fat Free Vegan Kitchen* blog. While you're there, check out her great recipes. Your best bet for finding nutritional yeast is a health food store.

Bragg® “Soy Seasoning” (Braggs) – Most of the dressing recipes include Braggs. Braggs is a soy product, similar to soy sauce though unfermented and gluten-free. The complete, proper name for “Braggs” is different depending on where you live, which is why I've shortened it to Braggs.

In Canada, it's called Bragg All Purpose Liquid Soy Seasoning. In the United States it is Bragg Liquid Aminos. I'm not sure what name it goes by in other countries.

Every health food store I've ever been in sells "Braggs". I think this might be one of the first health food store products; it's been around for a long time.

- If you live in the Canadian boonies and can't find it locally you can buy it at Well.ca.
- If you live in the American boonies and can't find it locally you can order it from Amazon.com.

You can substitute soy sauce for Braggs, but the result will taste slightly different.

The Bragg brand also includes raw apple cider vinegar and other foods.

Rice Vinegar – Look for this in the ethnic or Asian section of the grocery store. The most basic rice vinegar, and the kind I use for these recipes, has only two ingredients - rice and water. Check ingredients when you're shopping, lots of brands have other unnecessary and doubtful additives.

Tahini – Tahini is simply sesame seed butter. Most brands you can buy are made with roasted sesame seeds. That's the kind I use in these recipes. If you can't find it, you can make your own by toasting and then pureeing sesame seeds. Tahini is a staple in my kitchen for making sauces and dressings. I have seen many brands. The one pictured above is simply what's available to me where I live.

Herbamare® – [Herbamare](#)® is “natural fine sea salt infused with organic fresh herbs and vegetables”. In my own words, a salted herb mix. You should be able to find it in many grocery stores and health food stores. If you can't find it you can substitute with a bit of vegetable broth powder and salt. A recipe for vegetable broth powder is included in this e-book.

Miso – Miso is magic, at least to me. Its taste, its health benefits and how it's made. We love miso around here, which is why I've included our favorite miso soup recipe.



Miso is a fermented food made from soybeans and grain. The kind I use is made with soybeans and rice and is also called “sweet miso”. It is light in color and not as strong as the dark red miso. Feel free to substitute dark miso but you'll probably need less and get a slightly stronger, saltier taste.

The lighter miso is most readily available to North American shoppers. You'll find it in the refrigerated section of the grocery store or health food store. There are many different brands.

Recipes

1. [Cowboy Cashew \(Ranch Inspired\)](#)
2. [Lemon Tahini Dill](#)
3. [Sesame Miso](#)
4. [Tangy Almond Dijon](#)
5. [Roasted Garlic \(Caesar Inspired\)](#)
6. [Not-so-Spicy Peanut](#)
7. [Brienne's Miso Soup](#)
8. [Tasty Toasted Sunflower Seeds](#)
9. [Vegetable Broth Powder](#)

Cowboy Cashew (Ranch Inspired)

Ingredients

1 **3/4** cups almond milk
1/3 cup raw cashew nuts
1 lemon, juiced, or 3 tbsps lemon juice
2 tbsps rice vinegar
1 tbsp chia seeds, optional though dressing will be runnier without
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tbsp dried parsley, or 1/4 cup loosely packed fresh
1 tsp Herbamare

Notes

- You can substitute unsweetened soy milk for the almond milk. However, almond milk is my personal favorite for this recipe; it makes a rich creamy dressing. Homemade almond milk is what I use.
- This recipe makes an excellent coleslaw dressing. It's our favorite dressing for shredded cabbage salad. We like to eat coleslaw as a side to potatoes and baked beans.
- If you are using a regular blender you need to soak the cashews overnight or at least four hours. To soak cashews, place in bowl and cover with water. The next morning drain and rinse. Keep in fridge till ready to use.

Directions

Put all ingredients in blender. Blend till smooth.

Lemon Tahini Dill

Ingredients

3/4 cup water

1/2 cup tahini

2 lemons, juiced, or **1/3** cup lemon juice

1 tbsp dried dill

1 tbsp Braggs

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tsp Herbamare

2 tsps rice vinegar

Notes

- Dried basil can be used as a dill substitute. It will give a different flavor but is tasty.
- Did you know that sesame seeds have the highest level of calcium of any food in the world? Who needs cow's milk.
- Out of all the dressings in this book, this is one of my family's favorites.

Directions

Put all ingredients in blender. Blend till smooth.

Sesame Miso

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups water
1/2 cup toasted sesame seeds
3 limes, juiced, or scant 1/3 cup lime juice
2 tbsps miso
1 tbsp tamari
1 tbsp maple syrup
1 tbsp rice vinegar
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp chili flakes
1 tsp toasted sesame oil
1 tbsp fresh ginger, grated (optional)

Directions

Add all ingredients to blender. Blend till smooth.

Notes

- **Toasting Sesame Seeds**

Toast on medium heat for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring often, till seeds start to become fragrant (they will smell nutty) and turn light brown. Seeds will start to pop. Remove from heat.

Toasted sesame seeds are a lovely addition on top of other prepared foods as well. Make a parmesan cheese substitute by grinding together toasted sesame seeds, nutritional yeast and salt with a mortar and pestle. Sprinkle over popcorn. Yum!

- **Asian Salad Recipe**

Adding fresh ginger gives this dressing a real Asian flavor. Perfect for a green salad with lettuce, shredded cabbage, pea pods, mung bean sprouts, julienned carrots, red peppers, and edamame.

Tangy Almond Dijon

Ingredients

1 cup water
1/2 cup nutritional yeast
1/4 cup almond butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 lemons, juiced, or 1/3 cup lemon juice
2 tbsps dijon mustard
1 tbsp Braggs
freshly ground pepper, to taste

Notes

- I use roasted almond butter. If you prefer, you can use raw almond butter.
- 1/2 cup of nutritional yeast seems like a lot but it creates a very flavorful dressing. My father, who rarely eats nutritional yeast, loved this recipe when I prepared it for him. If you're unsure about using a large quantity of nutritional yeast, the recipe can easily be halved. In this way, you can test if you like the unique taste of this dressing, without preparing the full amount.
- Don't be shy with the freshly ground pepper.

Directions

Put all ingredients in blender. Blend till smooth.

Roasted Garlic (Caesar Inspired)

Ingredients

5 cloves garlic, medium-large sized
1 1/4 cups soy milk
2/3 cup raw cashew nuts
2 tbsps nutritional yeast
1 lemon, juiced, or 3 tbsps lemon juice
1 tbsp dijon mustard
1 tbsp Braggs
freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Notes

- If you are using a regular blender you need to soak the cashews overnight or at least four hours. To soak cashews place in bowl and cover with water. The next morning drain and rinse. Keep in fridge till ready to use.

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350. Separate cloves from head of garlic. Peel off outer paper but keep garlic covered by at least one full layer of inner paper.
2. Lay garlic on a small baking pan or heat proof casserole dish and bake in oven for 20 minutes or until garlic is soft and paper is splitting.
3. Remove garlic from baking dish and let cool briefly.
4. Pull paper skin off garlic, cut off any hard or burned parts (there shouldn't be many if the garlic was all covered). Add roasted garlic to blender.
5. Add remaining ingredients. Blend till smooth.

Not-so-Spicy Peanut

Ingredients

1/2 cup coconut milk
1/2 cup natural peanut butter
1/4 cup water
1 lemon, juiced, or 3 tbsps lemon juice
3 tbsps rice vinegar
2 tbsps honey
2 tbsps Braggs or tamari
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp chili flakes
1 tsp toasted sesame oil

Notes

- This is a good dressing for a Thai-inspired salad. Instead of adding beans to your salad try green peas or chopped tempeh.
- If you don't have coconut milk on hand you can substitute nut or soy milk.
- Did you know you can freeze coconut milk? If you open a can of coconut milk to prepare this recipe and won't be using the leftovers anytime soon, put the remaining coconut milk in a glass jar in the freezer. Coconut milk is a great addition to fruit smoothies.
- This recipe can be made three times with approximately one can of coconut milk. Divide the contents of the can in three, use one portion, then freeze the other two portions for future recipes.

Directions

Add all ingredients to blender. Blend till smooth.

Brienne's Miso Soup

Ingredients

5 1/2 cups water

3 tbsps miso

1/2 lb firm tofu, diced, optional

1/4 cup wakame (dried sea vegetable)

4 green onions, sliced

Notes

- Miso is a fermented food made from soybeans and grain. The kind we use in this recipe is made with soybeans and rice and is also called "sweet miso". It is light in color and not as strong as the dark red miso. Feel free to substitute dark miso but you'll probably need less and get a slightly stronger, saltier taste.

Directions

1. Bring water to boil.
2. Remove from heat. You don't want to "cook" the miso, just heat it up.
3. Add the miso and whisk well.
4. Add tofu, wakame and green onions.
5. Stir and serve.

Tasty Toasted Sunflower Seeds

Ingredients

1 cup raw sunflower seeds

3 tsps Braggs

Directions

Notes

- This recipe makes a great salty snack also. In our house a bowl of these disappears fast!
- Toasting seeds is a good job for kids to do in the kitchen. The result is tasty and kids learn stove safety with a small, discreet cooking job (unlike most cooking which involves lots of steps).

1. Place sunflower seeds in small cooking pot.
2. Toast over medium heat, stirring often, until seeds are lightly browned. Approximately three to five minutes.
3. When seeds are browned to your liking (be careful not to burn them) add the Braggs. Stir well and cook for another 30 seconds to one minute.
4. Remove from heat and serve sprinkled over salad.

Vegetable Broth Powder

Ingredients

3 cups nutritional yeast
1 cup dehydrated vegetable flakes
1/2 cup onion powder
1/2 cup dried parsley
1/4 cup garlic powder
1/4 cup italian seasoning
1/4 cup dried tomatoes, optional

Notes

- Use this powder as a base for soup, sauces and gravies. This powder will last indefinitely, or as long as the individual dried ingredients would last in your pantry - which is a long time.
- To make vegetable broth, mix 1 tbsp of powder with 1 cup water. There is no salt in this broth powder. Add salt to taste.

Directions

Put all ingredients in a blender and grind into a fine powder. Store in an airtight container.

Challenges



I've told the story of how we came to eat salads for lunch, explained how to build a meal sized salad, and shared with our favorite dressing recipes. I anticipate you might have a few questions or concerns about how to implement this in your own home.

Let's talk about the challenges you might encounter as you try to incorporate a daily (or near daily) meal sized salad into your own family's diet.

You spend your days out of the home.

I realize my own family's situation of working, learning, and living at home together is not the norm. If you want to incorporate more healthy vegetables into your diet, but everyone is out of the house during the day, here are a few suggestions.

- Pack large salads for the grownups, the way Damien used to when he worked at an office.

- Pack a lot of finger food veggies and great dips for kids' lunch boxes. Or if you suspect these won't get eaten (and who can blame kids for wanting to eat what everyone else is eating?) make vegetables and dip the after-school snack.

Eat a salad for supper or with supper. Because we eat a large salad at lunch we don't eat salad at supper. But if our schedule was to change, making lunchtime not conducive to salads, I'd incorporate those into our supper. And sometimes we do this, just to mix things up.

This is also a great way for you personally to eat more greens even if your family is skeptical. Make a huge salad for supper, like I've described in [Making a Meal Sized Salad](#). You can fill up on it and offer it as a side to your family.

Making salads seems like a lot of work



Well, I won't sugar coat this. Making salad for lunch is more work than opening a bag of bread, spreading peanut butter and jelly on two pieces and slapping them together. But there are ways to cut down on the work load.

- **Share the load** - In our home, my kids help wash and chop veggies. Or they follow one of these recipes to make a dressing (often improving it with their own additions).

- **Prepare ahead of time** - Wash and chop your greens and vegetables on the weekends, or on your days off from work. Or make your salad dressings ahead of time. They keep for at least five days in the fridge.
- **Outsource** - There is an amazing array of prepared vegetables available these days in the produce section of the grocery store. All you have to do is mix it together. We do this when we're traveling.

Do children eat salad? Or even vegetables for that matter?



Well, I'm probably not the person to ask about this since my children have been eating vegetables since they were babies.

My experience has been this - if there isn't any other option (served or in the cupboards), and kids are really hungry,

they'll eat vegetables. Maybe not all vegetables - everyone has certain textures and tastes they don't like - but enough variety of vegetables that they aren't missing out on all that essential nutrition.

And I can't overstate enough that you can't expect children to eat vegetables when their parents are picky and partial eaters. Set a good example.

If you have reluctant veggie eaters, introduce the idea of meal sized salads slowly and consistently. Start by adding a small salad to the meal and slowly increase the salad size while decreasing the other components.

Involve your children in salad preparations. Chopping vegetables, washing lettuce, making dressing - there are lots of jobs to share.

Offer a salad bar. Let children build their own salads with a variety of ingredients.

Cut the vegetables and leafy greens into bite-sized pieces. This seems almost too simple to mention.

I was reminded of the importance of this while my daughter was cutting cucumbers and I was cutting lettuce for today's lunchtime salad. We try to prepare salads with bite-sized pieces of both lettuce and vegetables, it's easier to eat. A simple trick like this might help your reluctant veggie eaters.

What about winter?

Salads are fabulous in summer when so much fresh, local produce is available. But our bodies need that nutrition just as much in winter as in summer. This past winter our family consistently ate salads through the winter and we live in a cold, northern climate.



On those days when we wanted something warm; when fresh salad was just not as appealing, we added [Brienne's Miso Soup](#) to the menu. Or we prepared a large vegetable stir fry instead. Daily meal sized salads is a goal, not a religion.

Organic vs. Non Organic



As much as I believe that organic is better than non-organic (for both health and environmental reasons), our family simply cannot afford to eat all organic produce. Nor do we have the inclination to grow all our own. If you find yourself in a similar situation, wanting to eat more organics

but financially unable to do so, here are a few thoughts to consider.

Non-organic produce is better than no produce. The studies that have been done over the years showing the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables have been done predominantly with conventionally grown produce. The benefits of eating plant foods still

outweigh the risks. For a more scientifically researched argument I direct you to this article [Organic vs. Conventional Foods](#) by Dr. Fuhrman.

Be familiar with the [Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen list](#). If you are really concerned, stay away from the worst non-organic “offenders”.

Resources

[Disease-Proof Your Child: Feeding Kids Right](#) by Joel Fuhrman, M. D.

[Eat to Live: The Amazing Nutrient-Rich Program for Fast and Sustained Weight Loss, Revised Edition](#) by Joel Fuhrman. M. D.

[Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease: The Revolutionary, Scientifically Proven, Nutrition-Based Cure](#) by Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr. M. D.

[Super Immunity: The Essential Nutrition Guide for Boosting Your Body's Defenses to Live Longer, Stronger, and Disease Free](#) by Joel Fuhrman, M. D.

[The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted And the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, And Long-term Health](#) by T. Colin Campbell, PhD and Thomas M. Campbell II

[The Engine 2 Diet: The Texas Firefighter's 28-Day Save-Your-Life Plan that Lowers Cholesterol and Burns Away the Pounds](#) by Rip Esselstyn

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About Renee



Renee's personal mission is to nourish, encourage and teach; build relationship and create beauty. Renee nourishes her family, and the friends and strangers that gather round her table, by cooking and serving healthy plant-based food from her always bustling kitchen. The Tougas family has kept a "mostly vegan" kitchen now for over eleven years.

In addition to being the resident Tougas family chef, Renee is a homeschooling coach, avid hiker and backpacker, and author of the e-book [Nurturing Creativity: A Guide for Busy Moms](#).

Fresh and honest, [Renee's blog](#) is a story of intentional family living. With an encouraging voice and beautiful photography, Renee inspires mothers, homemakers, and homeschoolers to live creative, healthy, and joyful lives.

Find her also at [Outsideways](#), where she keeps photo journals of her family's many adventures.

Renee is available for freelance writing, coaching and speaking on healthy, adventurous and creative family living. She can be reached at renee@tougas.net.