

## Ask Leyla: What's your preferred way to dress a salad?



**Q:** What types of salad dressing do you use? Are there any bottled dressings that you prefer?

**A:** There are certain foods I always have on hand and that includes a produce drawer full of salad vegetables. Whether it's for lunch or dinner (even breakfast!), I love to crunch on some lettuce, cucumber, celery, carrot, red cabbage and radishes, along with herbs like cilantro and parsley.

I don't use any prepared salad dressing because I find the ingredients aren't great, like low quality vegetable oils. And, invariably, they contain sugar in some form. If I'm in a restaurant, I ask to have dressing on the side (an exception is Caesar salad) and because I don't like overly dressed salads—slop! As an alternative, if I don't like any of the options on offer, I'll ask for the oil and vinegar caddy if one is available and a lemon or lime wedge. Salt and pepper are on the table.

At home, I'll salt and pepper the salad first and toss, then add either fresh lemon or lime juice, or a drizzle of red wine vinegar and a smaller splash of cold water (I find vinegars too strong and acidic, so I add about a TBSP of water). Occasionally, I'll add a couple of drops of balsamic vinegar. Then toss again making sure all the lettuce is coated. Finally I'll drizzle in olive oil and toss for a

final time. If you add olive oil first, it coats the salad and like a barrier doesn't let the added seasonings and acidic components mingle.

I could put all the dressing ingredients in a mason jar and shake and drizzle onto my salad, however I find adding them separately and tossing coats the salad better making it more flavorful. The exception is if I'm making a Dijon vinaigrette—as mustard needs to be added to prepared dressing, not directly to the salad. I should note, I don't add any sugar or honey to my dressings.

To your health!

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