

# SHOP TALK

A Twice-Monthly Newsletter for our Team. October 15, 2023

"Rise when you think you can't, crawl if you can't walk, and try even if you think you'll fail. Life is short so make it count."

*Genny Small*

"Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start."

*Nido Qubein*

"You can only lead someone as far as you are willing to go yourself"

*Josh Axe*

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow."

*Mary Anne Radmacher*

"Cancer can touch you, but not your soul; neither your thoughts nor your heart."

*Vikrmn*



**OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER  
AWARENESS MONTH**

# How to Store Salad so it Lasts Longer

Salads, whether made up of vegetables and/or grains, are a highly perishable food. That's because as soon as plants are removed from the soil, they no longer have a source for water or food to keep them going. So for every day they're not receiving those things is another day where they become less vibrant and fresh.

Beyond that, many salads contain ingredients that are both delicate (leafy greens, we're talking to you) and have a high moisture content. Delicate things tossed with heavy things and liquid things never work long-term. And those high-moisture foods, while great when consumed right away, will lose their liquid especially if exposed to salt. This can lead to a murky pool of water at the bottom of the salad container. And that moisture can lead to deterioration of your salad ingredients. One bad thing leads to another, in other words.

So, how do you get around these obstacles? How do you keep your salads fresh longer? Here are our top tips, tricks, and techniques to keep that crunch.

## **Make sure things are dry before you assemble**

Moisture is the enemy for many salad ingredients. If you're cutting vegetables, cooking grains, or draining canned foods, be sure to pat them dry before adding them to your salad. If an ingredient is particularly high in moisture, such as a cucumber, consider waiting to cut it or cut and place in a separate container instead of adding directly to your salad (more on that below).

## **For leafy greens, add paper towels**

Before storing your greens in the fridge, ensure that they are completely dry, says healthy living coach Nina Cherie Franklin, PhD, (aka That Salad Lady). She recommends placing paper towels between layers of leaves to prevent browning, wilting, and spoilage. If you plan to use a plastic bag for storage, be sure to press out any excess air. With a storage container, ensure that it's tightly sealed. Store greens in the



crisper drawer for best results, or as close to the bottom of your reach-in/walk-in cooler as possible.

## **Select and store your ingredients carefully**

Franklin recommends that cheeses, berries, and tomatoes—along with cooked ingredients (shrimp, chicken, egg, and bacon)—should be stored in their own separate containers in the fridge. So should any other proteins, whether they are animal-based or plant-based. These ingredients make for a great salad, Franklin says, but can also make it soggy, slimy, sticky, smelly, and sloppy when it sits for too long.

Salads made with firm, more durable chopped vegetables do fine stored together in the fridge, Franklin says. Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, carrot, and onions can all withstand a good amount of moisture and can be stored in an airtight container for maximum longevity. Bell peppers and cucumber are also on the firmer side but—if not eaten within one to two days—should be stored in separate containers, as they tend to spoil faster than the others.

## **Don't forget to label**

Beyond stocking up on lidded storage containers or silicone bags to keep your ingredients at the ready for assembly time, add labels with the date each item was prepped so you can consume them before they begin to go bad. Dana Angelo White, a registered dietitian, nutritionist, and certified athletic trainer likes quart containers (like the kind you get at the deli counter) for storing grain salads. "They are dishwasher and freezer safe and are perfect for

packing food to go or storing in the fridge for meal prep," she says.

### **Build smart**

Delicate ingredients including leafy greens, microgreens, and fresh herbs can get smashed by heavier ingredients in your salad bowl. And wet ingredients can create a swampy environment for your salad. Take those factors into consideration when building your dish; one option is to place the heavier ingredients in the bottom of the bowl and layer the lighter ingredients on top. For wet ingredients, it might be best to keep them separate and add them just before tossing and serving. And that goes for salad dressing as well.

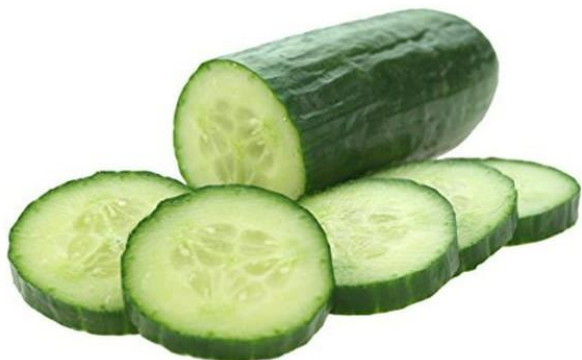
Add shelf-stable ingredients just before tossing  
Some ingredients, including dried fruits and nuts, will absorb water, which could make them soggy and unappealing. They're best if left at room temperature and added just before tossing the salad.

### **Keep crispy stuff and cheesy stuff off**

Since a salad is typically a high-moisture dish, it's best to keep anything crispy or cheesy off until serving. Crispy items such as croutons or fried wontons will become soggy, and cheese will become soft.

### **Pick the right spot in the refrigerator**

Where you store your salad matters. White advises never to store salad on the bottom or back of the fridge. Instead, store prepared foods like salad on the higher, top shelves, to prevent any chance of contamination from foods that could drip onto them. And avoid the back of the fridge, she says, because it's especially cold there. Those cold temps can actually freeze your lettuce and ruin your salad.



## **Want a better smoothie? Just Chill...**

For a better smoothie, with all that great flavor, don't just toss in ice cubes. Instead, freeze the ingredients. For example, bananas are a fantastic source of flavor, but frozen? They're the best ice cube around.



Likewise, kale, when frozen not only helps make ice cubes unnecessary, but its flavor is improved and some bitterness is reduced.

This works for berries too. Just wash, gently dry, and place them in the freezer in a zipper bag. Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries all freeze well.





## Pea Salad with Bacon ●

This is a simple, flavorful salad that will be a welcome addition to any meal.

2	lbs	frozen peas (thawed and drained)
1	cup	shredded Cheddar cheese
1	cup	Ranch dressing
3/4	cup	red onion, finely diced -not minced
1/2	tsp	salt
1/2	tsp	pepper
1/2	tsp	garlic powder
8-10	slices	cooked bacon, crumbled

The peas should be cold and not have a lot of excess water in them.

- In a bowl, combine ranch dressing, onion and spices.
- Blend together.
- Add in the peas and cheese. Fold in gently so they are coated in dressing but don't mash the peas.
- Add in most of the bacon and fold in (leave a little of the bacon as a garnish on top).
- Transfer to a salad bar pan or a serving bowl.
- Top with the reserved bacon crumbles.
- Place on salad bar or cover and put in the cooler until service time.
- This preparation will keep for 5 days under refrigeration. Remove what you need for a meal and keep the rest in a cooler until needed again.

## Lemon Pesto Chicken & Pasta ●

Prepared pesto and diced chicken make this a simple dish with vibrant flavor. Serves about 15

2	lbs	dried pasta of your choosing
1/4	cup	butter or margarine
1/4	cup	olive oil
3	Tbsp	minced garlic
4	lbs	cubed chicken, thawed
1	tsp	salt
1/4	tsp	white pepper
2	cups	cream
1	lb	pesto
1/2	cup	lemon juice
3/4	cup	parmesan cheese
4	cup	frozen peas (thawed)

- Cook and drain pasta, set aside.
- In large saucepan, combine butter, olive oil and garlic. Cook until garlic begins to sizzle.
- Add the chicken; season with salt, pepper
- Continue to cook until chicken is just about done.
- Add the cream and bring to simmer, then reduce the heat to low. Cook for about 5 minutes.
- Add the pesto; fold in until mixed throughout.
- Add parmesan cheese and half the lemon juice.
- Stir gently until all ingredients are incorporated.
- Add peas and cook about 4 more minutes.
- Portion pasta into a shallow, half size pan.
- Top with chicken & Sauce.
- Place on serving line and have backups ready.
- Optionally, add some crumbled bacon!





## Thai Cucumber Salad ●

Crisp, cool, just a hint of heat and a nutty flavor profile make this an excellent dish for the salad bar. You can adjust the amount of peanuts to your liking.

- |     |      |                                    |
|-----|------|------------------------------------|
| 3   | each | large cucumbers                    |
| 1   | Tbsp | salt (yes, that's a tablespoon)    |
| 1/2 | cup  | granulated sugar                   |
| 1/2 | cup  | vinegar (white, wine, cider, rice) |
| 2   | each | medium size jalapenos              |
| 1/4 | cup  | cilantro, chopped                  |
| 1   | cup  | roasted peanuts, chopped           |
- Peel the cucumbers, slice lengthwise in half.
  - Scrape out seeds with a spoon, then slice into 1/4" slices.
  - In a colander, place the cucumbers and then sprinkle on the salt. Toss a bit to distribute the salt.
  - Let drain half an hour.
  - In a mixing bowl, combine sugar and your choice of vinegar. Whip until sugar dissolves.
  - Seed the jalapenos and chop finely.
  - Add the cucumbers and fold to coat them well.
  - Add the jalapenos, cilantro, and peanuts and fold to coat well.
  - Place in the cooler for half an hour at minimum to help crisp the cucumbers.
  - Remove and serve in a bowl or on the salad bar.

## Tex-Mex Taters ●

Creamy, just a little lumpy, rich mashed potatoes with a Texas twang and a Mexican kick. 10 servings.

- |       |      |                                      |
|-------|------|--------------------------------------|
| 4     | lbs  | baking potatoes, peeled, cubed       |
| 2     | tsp  | salt                                 |
| 1     | cup  | buttermilk                           |
| 1     | cup  | milk                                 |
| 1/4   | cup  | melted margarine                     |
| 1     | tsp  | black pepper                         |
| 1     | tsp  | salt                                 |
| 1     | lb   | chorizo, removed from casing         |
| 1     | each | onion, finely diced (but not minced) |
| 1/2   | cup  | green bell pepper, finely diced      |
| 2     | each | jalapeno peppers, minced             |
| 1 1/2 | cups | shredded Cheddar cheese              |

- Boil potatoes in large saucepan with 2 tsp salt. Drain and return to the saucepan.
- Add milk, melted margarine, salt and pepper and mash the potatoes until just mashed. A few lumps are fine. Set aside for now.
- In a skillet, brown chorizo and, when done, add the onion and peppers. Cook until wilted.
- Add to the potatoes in the saucepan and fold in gently.
- Add in the cheese and fold in also. Be sure to save about 1/2 cup of cheese for the topping.
- Put the mixture in a half size shallow pan and top with the remaining cheese.
- Bake at 350 F until the top just starts to brown; remove and place on serving line.





## Pesto Bean Soup

A nice twist on an old favorite, this is a hearty dish for those cool days. Makes about 1 gallon.

2	Tbsp	cooking or olive oil
1	each	small onion, diced pretty small
3	Tbsp	garlic, minced and mashed a bit
1/2	tsp	red pepper flakes
2	lbs	great northern beans
1/2	cup	pesto
1/2	cup	grated parmesan cheese
2	quarts	chicken stock (broth)
2	cups	celery, diced
1	can	pimientos, diced

- In a stockpot, cook the great northern beans fully but don't mash; you want whole beans. Drain and set aside for now.
- In stockpot, heat oil and add onion; cook until the onion is tender.
- Add the garlic and pepper flakes; cook 2 minutes.
- Add the chicken stock and celery; bring to a simmer and cook until celery is tender.
- Add the beans and water to cover as needed.
- Add the grated parmesan cheese and stir in well.
- Add in the pesto and stir well but gently.
- Cook at a simmer until the flavors combine, just a few minutes.
- Add the pimientos and remove. Place in a soup kettle or in a third-size steamtable pan.

## Tejano Red Rice

Tinted with tomatoes and studded with carrots, corn, and peas, this is a flavorful and colorful side dish that can easily take center stage. Made it an alternate entrée by adding chicken. Serves 15

28	oz	tomato puree
1	cup	onion, minced very fine
2	tbsp	garlic, minced
1 1/2	tsp	salt
1	Tbsp	ground cumin
5	cups	chicken stock (approximate)
3/8	cup	cooking oil
4	cups	long grain rice
1 1/2	cups	fresh carrots, diced
1	cup	frozen green peas
1	cup	frozen kernel corn

- Puree tomato sauce with onion and spices until smooth. Measure amount of puree; set aside
- Measure enough chicken stock so that combined liquids equal 8 cups (2 quarts). Set aside.
- In a large saucepan, heat oil and add rice. Cook until it just barely begins to brown a little.
- Pour in puree and cook until it darkens a little.
- Add the broth and bring to a rolling boil.
- Remove from the heat and allow to stand 25 minutes until the liquid is absorbed and rice is fully cooked.
- Meanwhile, microwave or heat the vegetables and when rice is cooked, add vegetables to the rice and gently fold in.
- Fluff with a spoon and place in serving pan.





## Taco Pasta



A one-pot entrée that will add some variety to a Mexican themed meal. Serves about 10.

2	tbsp	cooking oil
1	each	onion, large, diced
1	each	red bell pepper, diced
1	each	green bell pepper, diced
2	lbs	ground beef
2	packs	taco seasoning (or 1/4 cup)
1	Tbsp	paprika
1	Tbsp	ground cumin
2	can	Ro-tel
1	lb	elbow macaroni (or rotini)
4	cups	beef stock
2	cups	shredded Cheddar cheese
4	Tbsp	lime juice (about 1 lime)
1/2	cup	cilantro, chopped somewhat fine
To taste		salt

- In large saucepan, brown ground beef and vegetables in cooking oil. Cook until the beef is done and just maybe a little pink still.
- Add broth, pasta, tomatoes, and seasonings.
- Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cover.
- Cook until the pasta is cooked, about 13 minutes. Stir occasionally while cooking.
- Add in the cheese, lime, and cilantro (optional).
- Adjust for salt and remove from heat.
- Allow it to stand about 5 minutes or so to thicken a little bit.
- Transfer to a steamtable pan.
- Garnish with sliced green onions if desired.

## Prevent Illness from *C. perfringens*

*Clostridium perfringens* bacteria are one of the most common causes of foodborne illness (food poisoning). CDC estimates these bacteria cause nearly 1 million illnesses in the United States every year.

*C. perfringens* can be found on raw meat and poultry, in the intestines of animals, and in the environment.

These bacteria make spores, which act like protective coatings that help the bacteria survive. Under certain conditions, such as when food is kept at an unsafe temperature (between 40°F–140°F), *C. perfringens* can grow and multiply. After someone swallows the bacteria, it can produce a toxin (poison) that causes diarrhea.

Common sources of *C. perfringens* infection include meat, poultry, gravies, and other foods cooked in large batches and held at an unsafe temperature. Outbreaks tend to happen in places that serve large groups of people, such as hospitals, school cafeterias, prisons, and nursing homes, and at events with catered food. *C. perfringens* outbreaks occur most often in November and December. Many of these outbreaks have been linked to foods commonly served during the holidays, such as turkey and roast beef.

Anyone can get food poisoning from *C. perfringens*. Young children and older adults are at higher risk for severe illness.

### Symptoms

Most people with *C. perfringens* infection develop diarrhea and stomach cramps within 6 to 24 hours after eating contaminated food. The illness usually begins suddenly and lasts for less than 24 hours. Diarrhea can cause dehydration, so it's important to drink plenty of fluids. This infection usually does not cause fever or vomiting, and it cannot be passed from one person to another.

If you think you or someone you know got sick from food, even if you don't know what food it was, please report it to your local health department. Reporting an illness can help public health officials identify a

foodborne disease outbreak and keep others from getting sick.

### Diagnosis and Treatment

Most people with *C. perfringens* infection do not receive a diagnosis.

Infection is confirmed when a laboratory test detects the bacteria or their toxin in a stool (poop) sample or the bacteria are found in food linked to illness. However, clinical laboratories do not routinely test for *C. perfringens* infection, and public health laboratories usually test for it only when it is the suspected cause of an outbreak.

Most people recover from *C. perfringens* infection without antibiotic treatment. Patients should drink extra fluids as long as diarrhea lasts.

### Prevention

Cook food to a safe temperature, especially beef roasts and whole poultry.

After food is cooked, keep it at 140°F or warmer or 40°F or colder if it will not be served and eaten soon. Bacteria can multiply rapidly if food is left at room temperature or in the “danger zone” between 40°F and 140°F. Never leave perishable food, such as meat, poultry, eggs, and casseroles, in the danger zone for longer than 2 hours (or 1 hour if exposed to temperatures above 90°F, like a hot car or picnic).

Refrigerate leftovers at 40°F or colder within 2 hours after cooking the food or within 2 hours after removing it from an appliance that’s keeping it at a safe temperature. Refrigerate within 1 hour if exposed to temperatures above 90°F.

### It is OK to put hot foods directly into the refrigerator.

Divide large pots of food, such as soups and stews, and large cuts of meats, such as roasts, into small quantities for refrigeration. This helps food cool quickly enough to prevent bacteria from growing.

Leftovers should be used within three to four days, if refrigerated. If you want to keep them longer, freeze within that four-day period.

Reheat leftovers to at least 165°F before serving.

