
LEMONY OIL DRESSING

Crunchy Tuscan Kale Salad with Lemony Oil Dressing

MARCH 2, 2010 by PEGGY ACOTT

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I came across this recipe back in 2007, attached to an

article/restaurant review in the NY Times. In that article, Melissa Clark echoed my own skepticism about a raw kale dish; I was no stranger to the winter green staple, but thought of it as coming out of a sauté pan with garlic and butter and balsamic vinegar, or in a soup or baking dish

of a long, laborious process, ending probably in a sore jaw and not much in the way of satisfaction.

But, Melissa's description of the simple yet intensely satisfying combination of earthy flavors and textures – and assurance that the Tuscan (or Lacinato) kale was indeed tender enough to be satisfyingly eaten raw, especially when sliced into thin ribbons – enticed me to try it.

I was totally won over. I may not have actually stood at the counter and eaten the entire bowlful the first time I made it, but pretty close. It was such a delightful surprise – a perfectly balanced combination of crunch from the kale and bread crumbs, with the garlic, salty cheese and sharp citrus of the dressing. The next time I made it I added more garlic and had more cheese and toasted bread crumbs available, as I found myself always wanting just a bit more of that bite.

nearly every day during one winter, her kale planted so thickly that it was available outside her back door nearly until spring. She claimed addiction. She served it back to me sometimes with her own experimental additions; toasted pine nuts and bits of homemade sundried tomatoes, even sometimes thin ribbons of red lettuce when nearing the end of her kale supply. It's a great dish that way, amenable to variation depending on mood or palate, or what happens to be in the pantry.

While I like (and sometimes use) these additions, I confess I prefer the fewer number of ingredients that I first encountered, letting each one have its full share of flavor in each bite.



Ingredients:

- 1 bunch Tuscan (Lacinato) Kale
- 1/3 cup toasted, coarse breadcrumbs
- 1-2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup grated cheese, preferably Pecorino Romano (see notes)
- 3 T. extra virgin olive oil, plus some to garnish as needed
- Fresh juice of one lemon
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- 1/8 – ¼ tsp. red pepper flakes (to taste)
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Trim bottom 2-3 inches of bottom kale stems and discard. Slice kale leaves, including ribs, into thin ribbons (1/4 inch or so). You should have 4-5 cups.

pound garlic into a paste with the salt. Place in a small bowl with the cheese, oil, lemon juice, pepper flakes and black pepper, and whisk to combine. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.

4. Put kale in large bowl, pour the dressing over and toss thoroughly (dressing is very thick because of the cheese and so needs lots of mixing to get all the kale covered. Using hands for this is a good method).
5. Let the salad sit for a minute, top with bread crumbs, more cheese, optional toppings (see note).

Yield: Serves two to six – seriously.

Misc. Notes:

Pecorino Romano is best with its sharp saltiness, but regular Romano, or even good quality Parmesan will work fine.

For some additional tastes and textures, the salad can be topped with finely chopped, sun-dried tomatoes, toasted

A fifth-generation Oregonian, Peggy Acott has been actively supporting garden and farming programs in the Portland area for over ten years, as Portland Nursery's Community Outreach Director, and as a founding board member of the Learning Gardens Institute. More of her writings and photography can be found on the Portland Nursery Community Outreach site.

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