

# Food Fact Sheet

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## SALAD TOPPERS AND FLAVOR POPPERS



"You can put everything and the more things the better into a salad, as into a conversation, but everything depends on the skill of mixing." -

Charles Dudley Warner

Sometimes people think green salad = lettuce = blah. Not so. The only limits to exciting salads are limits of the imagination.

Begin with salad greens. Enhance the eye appeal and nutrition of a salad by adding colorful fruits and vegetables. Keep it light by limiting the amount of salad dressing to about 1 tablespoon per 1½ to 2 cups of greens. Then make the flavor really POP by adding some of the following ingredients. You can either put them atop or mix them in with your salad.

While some of these salad additions are higher in fat than others, just small amounts (about 1 tablespoon) can give extra flavor without too many calories. Also, many provide a nutrition boost! Add from one to three of these flavor accents, depending on how many other ingredients are in your salad.

**Artichoke Hearts (marinated):** Enjoy the tangy taste of slice marinated artichoke hearts in your salad. It's as easy as opening a jar and adding as desired.

**Cheese (Parmesan):** If your experience with Parmesan cheese is limited to shaking it from a can, try using a vegetable peeler to shave about a tablespoon per serving from a block of cheese. Or, sprinkle freshly grated Parmesan on salads. As just a small amount kicks up the flavor, you may find you can afford trying some of the more expensive Parmesan cheeses. Add flavor and bone-building calcium, too!

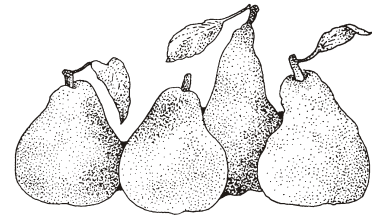
**Croutons:** Add crunch, flavor and fiber with homemade whole grain croutons. Enjoy the recipe at the end of this Fact Sheet.

**Dried Fruit:** (cherries, cranberries, raisins) Add these dried fruits for their flavor. Benefit from their antioxidants that may help protect against cancer and heart disease.

**Fresh Herbs:** (basil, chives, dill, parsley) - Toss small basil leaves or chopped larger ones in with your greens. Try chopped fresh dill. Add some minced chives or parsley. Start with about a teaspoon of herbs per person and adjust according to taste preference. Herbs boost flavor without increasing calories. Researchers also are finding many culinary herbs (both fresh and dried) have antioxidants that may help protect against such diseases as cancer and heart disease.

**Fresh Fruit:** (apples and pears) - Slice apples with their skins into salads.

The skin adds eye appeal and important dietary fiber, as well. Research shows an apple a day may indeed help keep the doctor away by helping reduce your risk of heart disease and cancer. Some commonly available apples that may be especially tasty in salads include Braeburn, Fuji, Gala, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Jonathan, Red Delicious and Winesap.



The juicy sweetness of pear slices, skin included, also tastes great in salads. Pears continue to ripen after they're picked. To determine if a pear is ripe, gently press it at the stem end. Most types yield to pressure when ripe. To speed the ripening of pears, put them in a ripening bowl or in a loosely closed brown paper bag at room temperature. Or, just set them in a pretty bowl on your counter and enjoy their appearance as they ripen. Plastic bags don't work for ripening. Refrigerate when ripe in an open or a perforated plastic bag in your refrigerator crisper drawer. (If you don't have access to commercial perforated bags, use a sharp object to make several small holes in a regular plastic bag.) Store fruits in a refrigerator crisper drawer separate from the one in which you store vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits and affect their quality. Keep cut fruits, such as apples, pears, bananas and peaches, from turning brown by coating them with an acidic juice such as lemon, orange or pineapple juice. Or use a commercial anti-darkening preparation with fruits, such as Ever-Fresh or Fruit-Fresh, and follow the manufacturer's directions. Cut fruits as close to serving time as possible. Cover and refrigerate cut fruit until ready to serve. Refrigerate peeled/cut fruits and vegetables so the TOTAL time they're at room temperature is less than 2 hours.

**Olives:** (black or green)- Add extra oomph with olives. For ease of eating and to distribute their flavor throughout the salad, pit and slice olives before placing them in your salad. About a tablespoon of olives per serving should be sufficient. According to the USDA National Nutrient Database, a tablespoon of canned ripe olives provides about 10 calories. Experiment with different types for different flavors. For example, many people enjoy the rich flavor of kalamata olives, a black olive frequently found in Greek salad, pasta and pizza recipes. (By the way, did you know olives are a FRUIT?)

**Nuts** (toasted almonds and walnuts) - Though almonds are a source of fat and calories, they contain mostly unsaturated fat that may help protect against heart disease. They also provide vitamin E, a nutrient that may be good for your heart. Almonds have about 7 calories each. Likewise, the fat in walnuts is mostly unsaturated. Walnuts also provide heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. A tablespoon or two of walnuts adds just 50 to 100 calories to a meal. Toast nuts to crisp their texture and bring out their rich aroma and taste. See toasting directions at the end of this Fact Sheet.



**Onions** (red) - Slip thin slices of sweet red onions into salads. Store onions before they're peeled at room temperature in a cool, dry well-ventilated area and do not store whole onions in plastic. Cut onions can be stored in sealable containers and refrigerated for 2 to 3 days.

**Oranges** - Sliced oranges juice up the flavor of salads and add brightness with their sunny color. Plus, they give you a healthy dose of vitamin C and folate.

**Sunflower Seed:** (toasted) - Add some vitamin E by tossing a tablespoon of sunflower seeds per serving into salads. One tablespoon provides about 50 calories and mostly unsaturated fat. Toast them for extra flavor – directions are given at the end of this Fact Sheet.

**Radishes** - Thinly slice radishes and sprinkle into salads for their crisp texture and peppery flavor. If the leafy radish tops are attached, remove them before storing. Radishes don't keep as well if their tops are left on. Store unwashed radishes in an open or perforated plastic bag in a refrigerator crisper drawer that is separate from the one in which you store fruits. Wash radishes and trim their roots just before using.

### **Recipes:**

#### **Homemade whole wheat croutons**

Whole grain bread

Olive oil

Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly brush top side of bread with olive oil. Cut into ½-inch cubes and spread in a single layer on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake on the middle shelf of the oven for 10 minutes or until browned and crisp.

#### **Toasted Nuts or Sunflower Seeds**

Preheat oven to 350°. Toast walnuts BEFORE chopping them into smaller pieces. Almonds may be toasted whole, sliced or slivered. Place nuts/seeds in a single layer in an ungreased shallow pan or RIMMED baking sheet such as a cookie sheet or jelly roll pan. (DO NOT use a baking sheet without sides. You may have nuts or seeds all over the oven if you accidentally tip the sheet when removing it from the

oven.) Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until they are GOLDEN brown. A toasted nut or seed may look more GOLDEN than BROWN. They will continue to brown slightly after they're removed from the oven. Stir once or twice or shake the pan during toasting to aid in even browning. Sliced and slivered almonds will toast faster than whole almonds. Remove from pan to cool. NOTE: The first time you try toasting nuts or seeds, it's better to err on the side of under-toasting than over-toasting. As nuts and seeds toast, you'll notice a change in their fragrance as well as their color.

### **Storing Toasted Nuts and Sunflower Seeds**

Rather than toast just a handful of nuts or seeds for one meal, make extra for later use. Store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Use within 1 to 2 weeks for best quality.