



Bring the Spark, Not the Slump

When you're a guest at a summer gathering, the pressure to "bring a dish" often leads to heavy, cream-based sides that leave everyone feeling sluggish by sunset.

This guide is for the guest who wants to contribute something vibrant that supports the collective energy of the group. These recipes are travel-friendly, crowd-pleasing, and designed as 'vitality swaps' for traditional potluck fare.



Vibrant Summer Avocado Citrus Salad

Yields: 4 servings | Prep time: 15 minutes

- 6 cups of chopped Romaine or a Spring Mix
- 2 medium avocados, diced (add these last to keep them green).
- 1 cup of Mandarin oranges (drained if using a can) or 2 fresh Navel oranges, segmented.
- 1 large fresh mango, diced.
- 1.5 cups fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup toasted sliced almonds or hulled pumpkin seeds (pepitas).

The Creamy Mango Dressing

(Inspired by the Zupa's style: thick, sweet, and tangy)

- 1 cup ripe mango chunks (fresh or thawed frozen).
- 3 tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar (provides that signature tang).
- 2 tbsp Honey or Agave nectar.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Light Olive Oil or Avocado oil.
- 1 tbsp Fresh lime juice.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp Salt.

Optional: 1 tbsp Greek yogurt or coconut cream if you want it extra opaque and creamy.

Preparation Instructions:

Make the Dressing: Place all the dressing ingredients into a blender or food processor. Blend on high until completely smooth and emulsified. If it's too thick, add water one teaspoon at a time until it reaches a pourable "creamy" consistency. Chill in the fridge while you prep the salad.

Prep the Base: In a large, wide wooden bowl (to keep that rustic aesthetic), toss your lettuce gently to create a bed.

Layer the Fruit: Arrange the oranges, mango, and strawberries over the greens. Layering them on top makes for a much better photograph for your website!

Add the Avocado: Dice your avocados right before serving and nestle them into the fruit.

Dress and Toss: Drizzle the creamy mango dressing generously over the top. Toss very gently just before serving to ensure the avocado stays intact and the lettuce stays crisp.

The Finishing Touch: Sprinkle with toasted almonds or seeds for that final bit of texture.



Summer Glow Quinoa & Berry Power Bowl

Yields: 4–6 servings | Prep time: 10 minutes (plus quinoa cooling time)

The Ingredients:

The Base:

- 3 cups cooked White Quinoa (cooled to room temperature).

The Berries:

- 1 cup fresh Strawberries (halved)
- 1/2 cup Blueberries
- 1/2 cup Blackberries.
- The Creamy Element: 1/2 cup Feta cheese crumbles (or goat cheese).
- The Crunch: 1/4 cup toasted sliced Almonds and 2 tbsp raw Pepitas (pumpkin seeds).
- The Freshness: A handful of fresh Mint leaves, torn.

The Dressing:

- 2 tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil,
- 1 tbsp White Balsamic Vinegar (or Apple Cider Vinegar)
- 1 tsp Honey,
- a pinch of salt.

Preparation Instructions:

1. Fluff the Base: Ensure your quinoa is completely cooled so it doesn't "cook" the berries. Place it in a large, wide serving bowl.
2. Layer the Berries: Gently fold in the strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries.
3. Add the Texture: Sprinkle the feta, toasted almonds, and pepitas over the top.
4. Whisk the Vinaigrette: In a small jar, combine the olive oil, vinegar, honey, and salt. Shake well until emulsified.
5. The Final Toss: Drizzle the dressing over the bowl and garnish with the fresh mint. Toss lightly right before serving at the gathering.



Grilled Corn & Black Bean Fiesta

Yields: 6 servings | Prep time: 15 minutes

The Ingredients

- The Charred Base: 4 cups Grilled Corn (cut off the cob for that authentic charred flavor) and 2 cans (150z) Black Beans, rinsed and drained.
- The Fresh Crunch: 1 large Red Bell Pepper (diced), 1 bunch Green Onions (sliced), and ½ small Red Onion (finely diced).
- The Creamy Finish: ½ cup Cotija cheese or Feta crumbles.
- The Herb Polish: ½ cup fresh Cilantro, roughly chopped.
- Optional Kick: 1 Jalapeño, seeded and finely minced.

The Zesty Cumin-Lime Dressing

- ¼ cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil.
- 3 tbsp Fresh Lime juice.
- 1 tsp Ground Cumin.
- 1 tsp Honey or Agave.
- ½ tsp Smoked Paprika.
- Salt & Pepper to taste.

Preparation Instructions

1. Char the Corn: For the best flavor, grill your corn cobs until slightly charred before cutting the kernels off. If you're in a hurry, you can pan-sear frozen corn in a cast-iron skillet until toasted.
2. Combine the Stars: In a large, wide terracotta or ceramic bowl (to match your rustic aesthetic), combine the corn, black beans, bell pepper, and onions.
3. Whisk the Zest: In a small jar, shake together the olive oil, lime juice, cumin, honey, and paprika until well emulsified.
4. Toss & Marinate: Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss gently. Let it sit for at least 10 minutes so the beans can soak up the lime and cumin.
5. The Final Garnish: Just before heading to your gathering, fold in the fresh cilantro and top with the cheese crumbles.



Cool Cucumber & Mint Sparkler

Yields: 4–6 servings | Prep time: 5 minutes

The Ingredients

- 1 Liter Sparkling Water or Club Soda (chilled).
- 1 Large Cucumber (partially peeled into long, thin ribbons using a vegetable peeler).
- 1 bunch of fresh Mint leaves (lightly slapped between your hands to release the oils).
- 2 fresh Limes (1 juiced, 1 thinly sliced into rounds).
- Plenty of ice cubes.

Preparation Instructions

Prep the Cucumber: Use a vegetable peeler to create long, thin ribbons from the cucumber. This allows the flavor to infuse quickly.

Muddle Lightly: In a large pitcher (or a high-quality travel dispenser), place the mint leaves and lime juice. Use a spoon to gently press the mint—don't shred it, just bruise it.

Layer the Aesthetics: Add the cucumber ribbons and lime slices to the pitcher. Layering them against the side of the glass before adding ice creates that beautiful, intentional look.

Add Ice and Sparkle: Fill the pitcher with ice, then pour the chilled sparkling water over the top.

Serve: Stir gently once. Serve in tall glasses with a sprig of mint and a reusable straw for a sustainable, high-end feel.



Vibrant Tomato & Mango Sun Salsa

Yields: 3 cups | Prep time: 10 minutes

The Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh tomatoes (finely diced)
- 1 large ripe mango (peeled and diced).
- ½ medium white or red onion (finely minced)
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro (chopped)
- the juice of 1 large lime.
- 1 jalapeño (seeded and finely minced—keep the seeds if you want a kick).
- ½ tsp sea salt and a pinch of black pepper.

Preparation Instructions

1. To keep the salsa from getting "mushy," ensure your tomatoes and mango are diced into uniform, small cubes. Removing the seeds and watery centers of the tomatoes helps keep the salsa crisp.
2. In a medium glass or ceramic bowl, combine the tomatoes, mango, onion, and jalapeño.
3. Drizzle the fresh lime juice over the mixture and add the garlic, salt, and pepper.
4. Fold in the Herbs: Gently fold in the chopped cilantro. Using a light touch ensures the herbs stay bright green and don't bruise.
5. Let it Marinate: For the best flavor, let the salsa sit at room temperature for about 15–20 minutes before serving. This allows the lime juice to soften the bite of the red onion and the flavors to meld together beautifully.
6. Serve with your favorite tortilla chips



Strawberry Glow Lemonade

Yields: 1 Half-Gallon | Prep time: 10 minutes

The Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh Strawberries (hulled).
- 1 cup fresh Lemon juice (about 5–6 large lemons).
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup Honey or Agave (adjust to your preference).
- 4 cups filtered Water (use sparkling water for a "fizzy" version).
- Extra strawberry slices, lemon wheels, and fresh mint sprigs.

Preparation Instructions

1. Puree the Berries: Place the strawberries and a splash of the water into a blender. Blend until completely smooth.
2. Strain (Optional): If you prefer a crystal-clear lemonade, pour the strawberry puree through a fine-mesh sieve into a large pitcher to remove the seeds. If you like a more rustic, "whole-food" texture, skip the straining!
3. Mix the Base: Add the fresh lemon juice and your choice of sweetener to the strawberry puree. Stir vigorously until the honey is completely dissolved.
4. Dilute: Pour in the remaining water and stir well.
5. Layer the Glow: Fill the pitcher (or individual glasses) with plenty of ice. Add the fresh strawberry slices and lemon wheels so they peek through the ice for that editorial, "stoppably" bright look.
6. The Final Touch: Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint for a pop of green and an extra hit of summer aroma.



Cloud-Cream Summer Fruit Salad

Yields: 4–6 servings | Prep time: 15 minutes

The Fruit Palette

- 2 cups fresh Pineapple chunks (drains well and adds structure).
- 1 cup Blueberries and 1 cup Raspberries.
- 2 Ripe Kiwis, peeled and sliced into half-moons.
- 1 Honeycrisp apple, diced (keep the skin on for color and fiber).
- Fresh mint leaves and a sprinkle of toasted coconut flakes.

The Whipped "Cloud" Dressing

- ½ cup Plain Greek Yogurt (or full-fat Coconut Cream for a dairy-free hygge version).
- 1 tbsp Honey or Maple Syrup.
- 1 tsp Vanilla extract.
- ½ tsp Freshly grated lime zest (this "sparks" the creaminess).
- Optional: A pinch of cinnamon to warm up the flavor profile.

Preparation Instructions

1. Whisk the Cloud: In a small chilled bowl, whisk together the yogurt (or coconut cream), honey, vanilla, and lime zest until light and fluffy. If using coconut cream, whip it vigorously to get a "moussey" texture.
2. Prep the Fruit: Combine all the fruit in a large wooden bowl. If you're bringing this to a gathering, keep the berries on top so they don't get crushed during transport.
3. The "Fold-In": Just before serving, pour the dressing over the fruit. Use a large rubber spatula to gently fold the cream into the fruit until everything is lightly coated.
4. Finish with Flair: Top with the toasted coconut flakes and mint. The contrast of the white cream against the vibrant fruit makes for a stunning, editorial-style presentation.



Roasted Sweet Potato & Sage Salad

Yields: 4–6 servings | Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 25 minutes

The Ingredients

- 3 large Sweet Potatoes (peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes).
- ½ Red Onion (thinly sliced)
- 2 stalks Celery (diced for crunch).
- ½ cup dried Cranberries (unsweetened)
- ¼ cup toasted Pumpkin Seeds (pepitas).
- 1 tbsp fresh Sage (finely chopped) and a handful of Parsley.

The Roasting Oil:

- 2 tbsp Avocado oil or Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

The Maple-Cider Vinaigrette

- 3 tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar (the "vitality spark").
- 2 tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil.
- 1 tbsp Pure Maple Syrup.
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard.
- Salt & Pepper to taste.

Preparation Instructions

1. Roast the Potatoes: Preheat your oven to 200°C. Toss the sweet potato cubes with the roasting oil and a pinch of salt. Spread them on a baking sheet and roast for 20–25 minutes until tender and slightly charred on the edges. Let them cool to room temperature.
2. Whisk the Vinaigrette: In a small jar, combine the apple cider vinegar, olive oil, maple syrup, and mustard. Shake vigorously until smooth.
3. Assemble the Salad: In a wide wooden bowl, combine the cooled sweet potatoes, red onion, celery, cranberries, and toasted pepitas.
4. The toss: Drizzle the dressing over the salad and add the fresh sage and parsley. Gently toss to coat, being careful not to mash the potatoes.
5. Serve: This salad can be served at room temperature or chilled, making it incredibly travel-friendly for outdoor gatherings.



Savory Red Potato Salad

Yields: 6–8 servings | Prep time: 20 minutes | Cook time: 15 minutes

The Ingredients

- 2 lbs Baby Red Potatoes (washed and quartered, skins left on for texture).
- 4 Hard-boiled Eggs (peeled and roughly chopped).
- 3 stalks Celery (finely diced).
- 3 tbsp fresh Dill weed (finely chopped) or 1 tbsp dried dill.
- ½ tsp Garlic Salt
- ½ tsp Onion Salt
- ½ tsp Celery Salt (adjust to taste)
- Freshly cracked black pepper
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The Home-Made Savory Mayonnaise

- 1 large Egg yolk (at room temperature).
- 1 cup Avocado oil or Light Olive oil (poured very slowly).
- 1 tbsp Fresh lemon juice or White wine vinegar.
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard.
- A pinch of salt.

Preparation Instructions

1. **Boil & Cool:** Place the baby red potatoes in a large pot of salted water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 12–15 minutes until tender. Drain and allow them to cool completely. (Pro tip: Cooling them fully ensures the homemade mayo doesn't separate).
2. **Whisk the Mayo:** In a medium bowl, whisk the egg yolk, mustard, and lemon juice until combined. While whisking constantly, add the oil drop by drop at first, then in a very slow, steady stream until the mixture is thick, pale, and creamy.
3. **Season the Base:** In a large rustic serving bowl, combine the cooled potatoes, chopped eggs, and diced celery.
4. **The Savory Blend:** Sprinkle the garlic salt, onion salt, and celery salt over the potato mixture. Toss gently so the seasonings are evenly distributed before adding the dressing.
5. **Fold & Finish:** Add your homemade mayonnaise and the fresh dill. Use a large spatula to gently fold everything together until creamy and well-coated.
6. **Chill:** Let the salad sit in the fridge for at least one hour before serving. This allows those savory salts to penetrate the potatoes and eggs perfectly.