

clover food lab

Hello!

It's Michelle from Clover, and I eat salad every day. Usually twice a day. Not even for my health, I just think they're easy and versatile and oh-so delicious. You can make them with things you have on hand, and then get creative with making new and tasty combinations. This is why today, I have the honor of teaching you all about how to build a deliciously balanced salad that's flavorful and hearty enough to be a meal on its own.

The beauty of a salad is that you can use just about anything you already have in your fridge (it doesn't even always need to include greens 🍋) You just have to follow this simple equation, what Chef Phil calls a salad sandbox.

CLOVER SALAD SANDBOX

- 3 parts Vegetables (Greens, Seasonal Vegetables (roasted, raw, pickled), or a mix of both greens and veggies)
- 1 part Plant Protein (Legumes, Beans, Hearty Grains like Farro, Tofu, Eggs, Cheeses)
- 1/2 part Crunch & More Protein (Nuts, Seeds, & Croutons)
- 1/2 part Optional Extras (Tangy Pickled Veggies, Sweet Fruits, & Herbs)
- Dressing to taste (look out for a dressing recipe tomorrow)

A good rule of thumb is to just think about balancing flavors. Think about an ingredient you love. Taste it. You can probably build a salad around it.

- If it's sweet, add something tart or creamy (like goat cheese, or a lemon-y vinaigrette.)
- If it's mild in flavor, add a big savory flavor (like blue cheese on iceberg.)
- If something is bitter, add something sweet (like citrus or sweet roasted veggies.)

Once you've layered all your flavors you'll coat it in the perfect dressing. Lucia will be going over those tomorrow in our next issue of Veggie Monster 🍷

In the meantime, we've put together a guide that will help you navigate the landscape of greens and their glorious curls, folds, stems, and leaves.

Veggie Monster's Guide to Greens

Red & Green Leaf Lettuce

Classic and versatile leafy green. Mildly sweet, with a delicate taste and nice, crisp bite.

Pairs well with: Tangy Dressings, Crunchy Raw Vegetables Like Cucumbers & Tomatoes, Pickled Carrots. Also great on sandwiches.

Buy at the Farmer's Market In-Season (spring/early summer). Or check out Little Leaf in Devens, MA for year-round Greenhouse Greens (you can find Little Leaf in most bigger grocery stores at this point).



Iceberg Lettuce

The infamous iceberg is super crunchy and neutral in taste due to its high water content (although this also makes it less nutritious than other greens).

Pairs well with: Creamy Dressings (think about the classic steakhouse wedge) or Bold Savory Vinaigrettes (like dijon), Strong Cheeses, Savory Legumes, and Spiced Nuts

In season during the spring and fall but "in season" year-round at the grocery store, where quality may be good or not. They grow best in around 60 degree temperatures.



Kale

Massage kale in between your fingers, with a bit of lemon juice & olive oil before building your salad.

Pairs well with: Citrus Vinaigrettes, Creamy Legumes (like chickpeas), Fruits (apples, pears, or citrus) Soft Cheeses. We love to make Caesar Salad out of kale too because it holds up better than romaine, and is a bit healthier too!

Kale comes into season during the summer and fall. After the first frost, kale leaves tend to be a little sweeter. Why? Brassicas have a nifty way of converting starches into sugars to protect them from freezing.



Endive

Crunchy and slightly bitter with a hint of sweetness. Technically endive refers to a whole family of greens including frisée & chicory

Pairs well with: Creamy Dressings, Sweet Roasted Veggies, Strong Cheeses, Citrus, & Nuts.

In season during early fall and winter.



Romaine

Similar to Iceberg with a strong crunch to it but a little more nutritious and slightly sweeter.

Pairs well with: Creamy Dressings or Rich Vinaigrettes, Strong Cheeses, Savory Legumes, and Spiced Nuts

In season during the spring and fall.



Arugula

Peppery with a slight crunch and delicate leaves. It's very versatile and can be mixed with other greens to spice up a salad easily.

Pairs well with: Sweet Vinaigrettes, Fruit, Sweet Roasted Vegetables, Goat Cheese, Hard Cheeses (Pecorino, Parmigiano Reggiano), Nuts

In season in the summer. Be careful not to over-dress, as the delicate arugula can get waterlogged with dressing easily.



These are just guidelines, not hard and fast rules. Salads are fun, feel free to play around.

You can always go to your local store for organic greens, but if you're in the area you can also find some at the [Somerville Winter Farmers Market](#) from local farmers growing them in their greenhouses.

If you start playing with salad and decide you'd like to dive deeper, I recommend [Salad Freak](#) by Jess Damuck. Lucia also likes [Salad Party](#) which is like the "choose your own adventure" of cookbooks.

Enjoy!

