

TASTE

GREEN
REVOLUTION

Has salad for you become synonymous with limp lettuce and cheerless tomatoes? New York-based chef **JOHN FRASER** shows **AARTI VIRANI** five ways to sex up her bowl

Chef John Fraser's edible universe—a whimsical world where beets are rotisserieed, sweet potato is barbecued and baby carrots are delicately fried, then dunked in a velvety tofu and jalapeno dip—has vegetables playing anything but supporting roles. While Fraser has drawn consistent crowds to his Michelin-starred Dovetail, a nouveau American restaurant on New York's Upper West Side, his newest eatery, Narcissa (a joint venture with hotelier André Balazs), is decidedly more produce-friendly: a gastronomical ode to his farm-fresh, Californian roots.

Fraser, who has trained under culinary masterminds like Thomas Keller and Alain Passard, is an enthusiastic proponent of utilising seasonal, well-sourced vegetables, fusing spontaneity with a passion for all things healthy. And that's precisely why we picked his epicurean brain for ways to resuscitate that tired staple: the salad. So if your definition of the ubiquitous dish conjures up an image of lacklustre lettuce, well, think again. From revamping dressing to mixing temperatures and strategically choosing your leaves, Fraser's tips will be sure to shake up the way you eat your greens.

John
Fraser

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CUMIN AND LIME VINAIGRETTE

Ingredients

138gm lime juice
7.5gm cumin, toasted
24gm agave nectar
200gm olive oil

Method

Combine and whisk

CRUDITÉ SALAD

Ingredients

48gm Brussels sprout leaves
380gm mint leaves and
mixed greens
72gm grapes
52gm apples (peeled,
ribbon-style)

Method

Toss ingredients with cumin
and lime vinaigrette

1 **► DRESSING UP**
“Balsamic vinegar and olive oil dressings have become the standard for home cooks,” laments Fraser. He recommends perkier alternatives, like cumin and lime. “This cumin and lime vinaigrette will hold for five days if kept cold. It’s a great, everyday way to make salads more exciting,” he assures. Steer clear of the dreaded wilt factor—remember, your leaves should shimmer, not soak—by dressing your salad immediately before serving. “Instead of pouring the dressing over your salad, dress the bowl instead. When you add the salad into the bowl, mix it against the bowl to make sure your dressing is evenly distributed,” he adds. And if you must have something creamy, swap recipes that call for mayonnaise with non-fat yoghurt.

► OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Take it a step further by contrasting temperatures. “A classic example is a frisée salad topped with a warm poached egg and bacon,” he offers. “But you can also easily top your salad with warm lentils or roasted mushrooms.” Roasted cauliflower tossed with watercress; grilled eggplant medallions and baby spinach... the pairing possibilities are endless. Ultimately, combining the hot and cold is also an efficient, no-nonsense way to morph a salad into a main dish.

► ELEVATE THAT PLATE

Another well-kept restaurant secret? Rather than slicing and dicing your vegetables, reach for a peeler to create elegant ribbons, shavings and tendrils instead. It’s a technique Fraser’s perfected at Narcissa, where baby roots (which are mixed with folds of Manchego cheese, ham, and Brussels sprout leaves) get the peeler treatment. “Get creative with apples, celery, cabbage, carrots and radishes—play with different textures,” urges Fraser. “Your peeler can also help you create a salad that doesn’t necessarily need lettuce as its base ingredient.”

◀ HALE AND HEARTY

Select sturdy greens that can stand up to vinaigrettes. Fraser praises escarole—“the bitter green is great for balancing out acid,” he says—and nutty lollo rosso lettuce, for its striking violent and crimson edges. An added benefit of using darker greens? They do double-duty as antioxidants, in addition to preventing heart disease. “Pickled vegetables are often overlooked but are an easy and healthy way to add flavour to your salads,” Fraser insists, citing red onions, cucumbers, carrots and even traditional Indian achaars as refreshing ways to experiment with tangy flavours while also providing a burst of colour—bitter greens are ideal accompaniments here, as they won’t be overpowered by the tartness of the preserves.

◀ THE PERFECT PACKAGE

To really up your greens game, Fraser recommends investing in a set of sleek, high-angled bowls. “I love these kind of bowls as they make the salads easier to eat,” he reveals. If you’re an on-the-go eater, try one of our favourite veggie vehicles: the wide-mouthed jar. Just remember to pour your dressing in first, followed by layers of hard produce (think carrots, beets, red and green peppers, etc.), grains (barley, quinoa, boiled corkscrew pasta, even cooked rice), cubed cheese, nuts and finally, bite-sized greens—remember, the most non-absorbent ingredients go on the bottom to avoid sogginess. ■

