

Salad of Peppery Greens with Baked Goat Cheese and Olives (from *The New Vegetarian Epicure*, Anna Thomas)

2 bunches arugula
1 small heady young curly endive
1 small head radicchio
3-4 heads Belgian endive
handful of fresh basil leaves
10 oz log of fresh white goat cheese
2/3 cup fruity green olive oil
½ cup fine dry breadcrumbs
½ cup coarse-ground walnuts
3-4 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
salt and pepper
25-30 cured black olives
optional garnish: marinated sun-dried tomatoes

Wash and trim the arugula, curly endive, and radicchio, spin dry in a salad spinner, and tear into manageable pieces. Wash the Belgian endive and slice it crosswise. Cut the basil leaves into slivers.

Cut the log of goat cheese into 8 thick circles or equal size. Pour 1/3 cup of olive oil into a small bowl. In another bowl, combine the breadcrumbs and ground walnuts. Take one goat cheese slice at a time, coat it lightly with the olive oil, then dip it in on all sides into the breadcrumb mixture, pressing gently, until the goat cheese is wearing a nice little coat of crumbs and walnuts. Arrange the coated goat cheeses on a stainless steel baking sheet.

About 10 minutes before you are ready to serve the salad, preheat your oven to 400 degrees. Toss the salad greens together in a big bowl with the remaining 1/3 cup of olive oil, some balsamic vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste. Divide the salad among 8 large plates.

Bake the goat cheeses in the preheated oven for 5 minutes, then check them. Their crusts should just be turning golden brown. Leave them for another minute or two if necessary, but watch them carefully, because they can turn dark awfully fast once they warm up.

Remove the goat cheeses from the oven and, working quickly but carefully, pick up one at a time with a spatula and slide it out onto the center of a salad. Remember, they are very soft now. Garnish each salad with a few olives, and marinated sun-dried tomatoes if desired. Serve at once.

Serves 8