



SALADS THAT DON'T SUCK

E-BOOK WITH RECIPES

Banish Bland, Boring Salads and
Reclaim Them as the Flavorful,
Filling, and Fun Meals They Can Be

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WHY DO SALADS HAVE TO SUCK? (THEY DON'T)

Have you ever sat down to eat a salad (you know, for your health 🙄) and thought, "Oh man, here we go again"? If you picture a salad and immediately start thinking of all the things you'd rather eat instead, you're probably eating a salad that sucks. That used to be me!

But I'm not here to convince you that salads should become your new favorite food. I just want to show you just how GOOD they can be!

“ Good food is very often, even most often, simple food.

– Anthony Bourdain

By kicking flavorless, unappealing ingredients to the curb (I'm looking at you, iceberg lettuce) and focusing on elements that provide interesting texture, great taste, and nutrition, salads can be transformed to something we actually look forward to eating.

This e-book is designed to inspire you to break the mold of what you think a salad should be. Using a simple template, you'll be able to build a hearty, satisfying, and delicious meal: **a salad that doesn't suck.**

(And just kidding about the iceberg lettuce...it's not my top choice but I'm not here to yuck your yum if you enjoy it!)

HERE'S WHAT'S INSIDE

As the author of this e-book, I'm totally biased, but I think you're in for a real treat. I pulled from my experiences as a registered dietitian, food blogger, and cookbook author to set you up for success.

On the following pages, you'll find:

- A ready-to-use template for planning your #SaladsThatDontSuck
- Tips to shop for and store your ingredients
- A list of "need to have" and "nice to have" kitchen tools
- Recipes to inspire you

My recipes are intentionally designed to be customized and changed according to your tastes. Don't be shy about swapping out things you don't like or skipping something if you don't have it on hand. There are truly no food rules when it comes to making *your* version of a delicious salad!

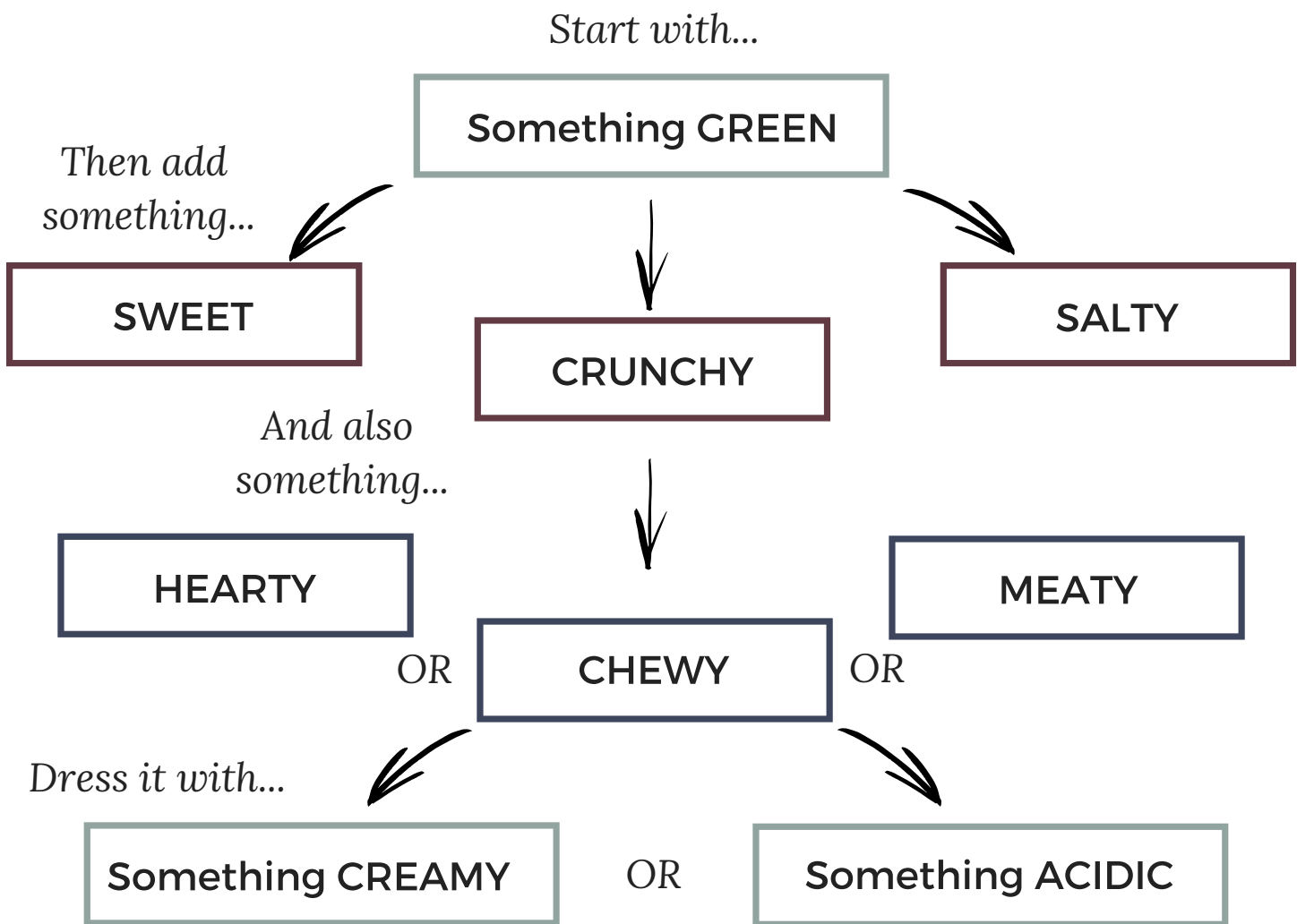
A NOTE ABOUT MEAL PLANNING & MEAL PLANS

I'm often asked if a meal plan is included...and the answer is no. "Meal planning" in the traditional sense implies rigid rules about what you can and can't eat, plus hours in the kitchen meal prepping. I encourage you to ditch that version and instead try to think of meal planning as an act of self-care. I talk a lot more about it in this post, so click [**HERE**](#) to read more!

So why a template? I choose to build most of my meals this way because it's the most flexible approach *for me*. That doesn't mean it's the right approach for you, but I offer it here because it's made a huge difference in my ability to enjoy my meals, get creative, and use ingredients I already have. Sound like something you'd like?

Let's take a look at it!

THE TEMPLATE



We'll start at the top and work our way down. But you might be wondering:

WAIT...WHERE ARE ALL THE VEGGIES?

I'm not saying veggies aren't important. But they're not the only option. Rather than thinking of food groups, start thinking about flavor groups.

Vegetables can be SWEET, CRUNCHY, or SALTY. When done right, they can also be HEARTY, CHEWY, and MEATY (mushrooms, anyone?). So can lentils or legumes, a protein source (more on that later), or grains. I'll be the first to say I love my vegetables but if that's not for you, you can still build a salad that doesn't suck.

SOMETHING GREEN

Build your base with something that not only tastes good, but has a texture and color you also find appealing. Here are a few options to start you off:

- Fresh spinach
- Spring mix/baby greens
- Arugula
- Massaged kale
- Chopped or sliced Swiss or rainbow chard
- Shredded cabbage

You also have your standard options like romaine or Bibb lettuce (both green and red), and yeah, OK, if you must...iceberg lettuce. Feeling more adventurous? Try bok choy, endive, or raddicho.

SOMETHING SWEET

Many elements in a salad fall towards the salty or savory end of the spectrum so it can be helpful to balance flavors with something a little more sweet.

Consider the following:

- Dried cranberries or cherries
- Chopped dried apricots or pineapple
- Fresh fruit of any kind, especially berries, pears or apples, or citrus segments
- Candied nuts, such as almond, pecans, or walnuts
- Pomegranate arils
- Sweet dressings that use agave, maple syrup, or other sweetener
- Flaked or shredded coconut

Even vegetables can have sweet inclinations. Things like carrots or sugar snap peas can pull double duty to lend some sweetness to a salad. And roasted sweet potatoes? Well, it's right there in the name that they could absolutely add a lil' something sweet to the mix.

SOMETHING SALTY

If you find a salad tastes bitter or sour based on the presence of certain greens or citrus, saltiness can offer some balanced flavor. Try adding something from this list:

- Liquid aminos, tamari, or soy sauce (I recommend these in a dressing)
- Sea vegetables or nori (dried seaweed, available at Asian markets)
- Sea salt, Himalayan salt, or infused/smoked/flavored salts

Certain aged or smoked cheeses can also add a salty element. Keep in mind that a little goes a long way and you can always add more if needed. Taste first and decide how much is needed to find a palatable balance.

SOMETHING CRUNCHY

This might be my favorite category because it's self-explanatory! The goal is to find something that breaks up the texture to offer crispness, crunch, and the satisfying feeling of actually chewing your food. A few of my favorites are listed here:

- Fresh radishes
- Whole baby carrots
- Fresh veggies (personally, I'm not a fan of celery, but can't deny it has some crunch!)
- Puffed quinoa or crisped rice
- Apples
- Wonton strips
- Croutons





SOMETHING HEARTY, CHEWY OR MEATY

There is actually a lot of overlap between these elements, so think of it as your chance to play and explore ingredients both familiar and unique. Flavor really comes down to a combination of:

TASTE
+
MOUTHFEEL (also TEXTURE)
+
AROMA
+
PLEASURE

That's why your preferences in this section will depend on finding foods you genuinely enjoy and want to eat. Try adding some of these:

- Tofu, either cubed and marinated, seared or pan-fried, or scrambled like sofritas
- Nuts and seeds
- Cooked grains, such as sorghum, freekeh, wheat berries, farro, or barley
- Marinated mushrooms
- Bacon bits or chopped beef jerky (kitchen hack: try slicing with kitchen shears!)
- A hard-boiled egg, sliced or chopped
- Beans, chickpeas, or lentils

LET'S TALK DRESSING

Gone are the days of dry, undressed salads! Food rules and diets might have made you feel like you can't include this element (or only a little of it), but I think a good dressing is essential for #SaladsThatDontSuck. Here's why:

Dressings can:

- Add moisture and/or fat for an improved mouthfeel
- Help loose ingredients stick together for easier eating
- Include any missing elements from the template (like sweet or salty)

A NOTE ABOUT CONVENIENCE

Store-bought dressings are A-OK in my book! Sure, it's fun to make your own mixture or customize it, but you definitely don't have to.



SOMETHING CREAMY OR SOMETHING ACIDIC

Creaminess (from fats or oils) and acidity (from citrus, vinegar, or pickled ingredients) work similarly: **they make your food taste better.**

Fat carries flavor because it helps dissolve fat-soluble molecules in your dressing or salad ingredients. And that mouthfeel...yum! Acidity makes your mouth secrete more saliva (lovely visual, I know) and brings other flavors to life. Don't overwhelm or drown your salad, but don't leave it naked either!

PICK YOUR PROTEIN

As you've seen, some of the ingredients listed in other sections provide plant- or animal-based protein. Sometimes adding a feature protein can make a salad feel more like a meal, so consider options like these:

- Animal-based: chicken, steak, seafood of nearly any variety, or bacon
- Plant-based: tofu, tempeh, seitan, or vegan-friendly meat alternatives
- Convenience: rotisserie chicken, sliced deli meats, canned tuna or salmon

We tend to think that a meal isn't complete without a heavy focus on protein, and it's true - it may help you feel more full. But if you don't include it, don't stress! Most of us are eating plenty throughout the day.



DITCH THE FOOD RULES

Sometimes we hear "salad" and think of a big ol' bowl of leafy green stuff. But there are other types of salad you might enjoy more.

Break the mold a little bit and experiment with grain-based salads, tuna or chicken salad, fruit salad, and more. You can even swap some of the greens for fresh herbs like basil, parsley or cilantro if you're craving even more flavor.

Give yourself permission to ditch the expectations of what a salad "should" look like!

THE STORAGE TIPS

Now that you're thinking of ingredients and planning your recipes, it's time to think about storage and prep! You can reduce food waste and stretch your grocery budget further by storing food in the ideal manner whenever possible.

REFRIGERATOR

This is for the most perishable ingredients, thawed items, or anything you plan to eat or reheat in the next couple of days:

- Leafy greens, certain fresh fruits (berries, for example), fresh herbs, and pre-chopped or prepared vegetables
- Dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, or dairy-free alternatives
- Proteins (beef, chicken, pork, seafood, etc) or thawed items from the freezer
- Condiments and cooking ingredients such as lemon/lime juice, soy sauce, mustard, etc.

FREEZER

If you have the space, freezers can be really helpful for storing bulk purchases. But if not, don't sweat it! Stock yours with some of these items:

- Frozen peas, shelled edamame, or your favorite frozen veggies
- Frozen fruit or berry mixes
- Frozen fish filets, pre-cooked chicken tenders or steak strips
- Extra nuts or seeds (so they don't go rancid) or bread (so it doesn't go stale)



PANTRY

This is for the least perishable ingredients, items you purchase in bulk, or canned options like beans, corn, or other veggies. Here are some other options for stocking your pantry:

- Canned fish and seafood like tuna, salmon, smoked oysters, or tinned fish like sardines and anchovies - hello homemade Caesar dressing!
- Certain types of produce, like potatoes, onions, avocados, and tomatoes
- Nuts and seeds
- Rice, quinoa, pasta, couscous, lentils, or other grains and legumes
- Dried herbs and spices
- Cooking oils and vinegars
- Unopened salad dressings (just check to make sure they don't need to be stored cold)

Now, we move onto the last part: kitchen tools!

A NOTE ABOUT ORGANIZATION

Sometimes it feels like half the battle of preparing meals is having what you need, when and where you need it. Spending some time to organize your cooking or food prep space, storage containers, and ingredients can go a long way towards saving frustration later on.

Another benefit: less wasted food. Freezer burn or spoilage are two big things that contribute to food waste at home. Clear labeling with use-by dates can help you quickly see what you can use, and what needs to go. I keep a Sharpie and tape or labels on hand so I can clearly label containers and bags.

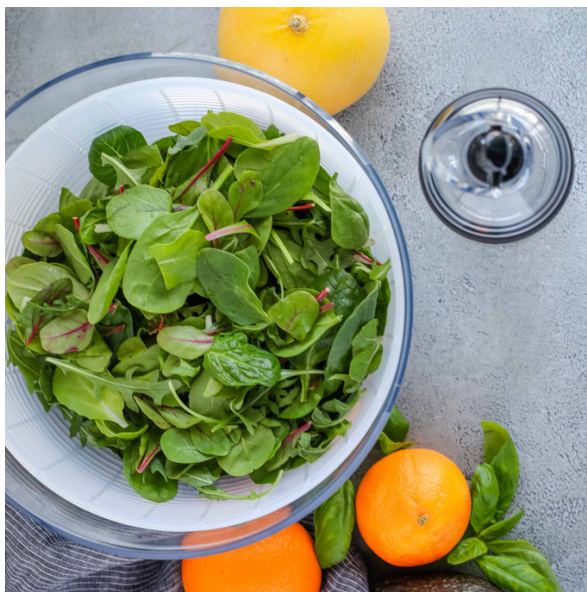
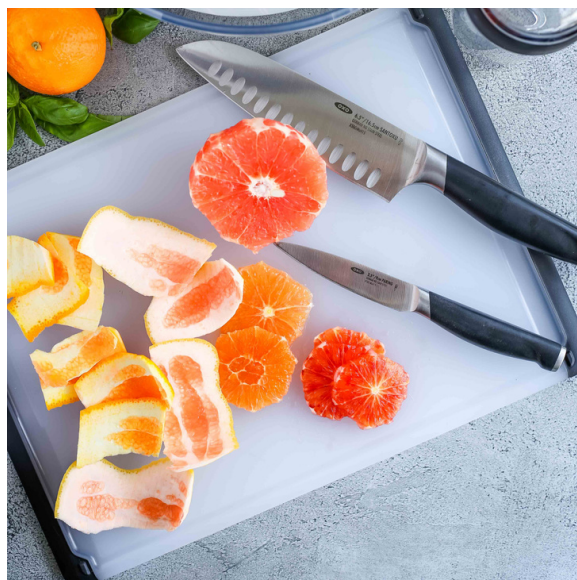
THE KITCHEN TOOLS

Wouldn't it be nice if we all had our own version of a dream kitchen? Any and everything you could possibly need to craft delicious, nourishing #SaladsThatDontSuck...

Well, if that's not your reality, don't stress. It's not mine either! Here are some of the basic, essential tools for making great salads at home (I think of them as "need to have") , plus some that are simply "nice to have" and make cooking more fun or convenient.

NEED TO HAVE

- Sharp knife and cutting board (remember, a dull knife is a more dangerous knife!)
- Mixing bowl & tongs
- Measuring cups & measuring spoons
- Airtight, sealing storage containers for leftovers or prepped ingredients
- Can opener



NICE TO HAVE

- Whisks (especially in mini sizes for DIY dressings)
- Salad spinner if you're washing a lot of leafy greens by hand
- Salad dressing shaker with spout
- Mandolin, grater, or food processor for easy slicing and shredding

To see more options, check out my **Resources** page online!

FINAL THOUGHTS

A FEW QUICK TIPS BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Try **starting with a "star" ingredient** and play matchmaker to build the rest of the salad around ingredients that pair well with it.

If you're not serving your salad right away, **hold off on dressing it**. Soggy salads (in my opinion) fall into the "salads that suck" category!

And speaking of dressing, **start with a little** - you can always add more! You want the greens and other ingredients coated, but not drowning in dressing.

Cooking = added FLAVOR. Don't feel limited to the raw version of veggies or fresh fruits in your salads. Roasting, grilling, or baking can take the flavor in your salad to the next level in a hurry.

Stick to the seasons for the freshest ingredients. You can always add frozen or canned options (they count towards total servings for fruits & veggies), but **draw inspiration from what's in season** throughout the year.

And last but not least...**don't be afraid to write your own playbook!** Although these suggestions can get you started, your #SaladsThatDontSuck can be whatever you want them to be.



RECIPES

Click on the links below to view some of the salad recipes currently available on www.streetsmartnutrition.com:

AMARANTH TABBOULEH SALAD

CITRUS CAPRESE SALAD

CHIMICHURRI SHRIMP SUMMER SALAD

CONFETTI QUINOA SALAD

CRUNCHY CURRIED TUNA SALAD

EASY PESTO PASTA SALAD

GRILLED ROMAINE CAESAR SALAD with CHICKEN

KICKIN' QUINOA SALAD

LENTIL SALAD with FETA & GRILLED VEGETABLES

MASSAGED KALE SALAD with SESAME-LIME DRESSING

SPRING GREENS PANZANELLA SALAD

SUMMER STONE FRUIT SALAD

UN-STUFFED PEPPER SALAD

VEGAN POMEGRANATE SALAD

ABOUT CARA

AND STREET SMART NUTRITION



I'm Cara! I'm a Kansas City-based dietitian and the owner of Street Smart Nutrition. Street Smart Nutrition provides nutrition coaching services as well as consulting and nutrition communications services. I'm passionate about helping people rediscover joy in eating deeply nourishing meals without restriction or fear.

I am the author of three books, including an intuitive eating workbook for a non-diet approach to nutrition. I also appear in media segments in the Midwest region and contribute to national print & digital health publications.



I love inspiring others to embrace #SaladsThatDontSuck - just look at this spread for Twin Cities Live (Minneapolis, MN).

The hosts loved that colorful salad recipe!

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE VISIT:
WWW.STREETSMARTNUTRITION.COM

THE DISCLAIMER

A NOTE ABOUT SHARING

If you use this e-book to make some amazing **#SaladsThatDontSuck**, I'd love to see them! Share and tag on social media (click to connect with me below), but please remember to read the fine print below. Cheers to many, many more delicious salads!



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The content in this book is written by Cara Harbstreet, MS RD LD. Although she is a registered dietitian, she is not your dietitian. The information in 'Salads That Don't Suck' is for general information only and is not intended to substitute professional medical advice, or to diagnose or treat specific medical conditions. All specific medical questions should be presented to your own health care professional.

The recipes in 'Salads That Don't Suck' are not individually tailored. It is recommended that you consult with a registered dietitian should you want to further individualize these recipes to fit your personal goals and conditions. Please use your own caution and refrain from making recipes that have foods you may have allergies or intolerances to.

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