

FABULOUS MAKE-AHEAD SUMMER SALAD SUPPER

SCRUMPTIOUS SOUTHWEST LAYERED SALAD

I have received numerous requests for something simple, scrumptious, make-ahead, easy-traveling and easy to serve for Graduation Luncheons, School Picnics, Showers, Teacher's Luncheons – you name it!

In answer to your many requests, I have resurrected the “layer salad” from a couple of decades ago. This recipe boasts flavor, texture, good nutrition, low-carb, and convenience all wrapped into a delicious dinner that is easy traveling, easy to serve, you can make ahead, and it is simply scrumptious!

This recipe is extremely adaptable in reference to what ingredients you would like to layer, so I am giving you my basic recipe with not only variations in the layered ingredients, but also three different salad dressings to top it all off! This way you can cater to your occasion.

NOTE: It is best to layer this salad in a large clear glass flat-bottom bowl, ingredients going in from top of the list to bottom topped with one of the thick, tasty dressings that brings it all together. This is in the style of the original layered salad. However, if you prefer, you can layer the ingredients side by side on a large platter, serving the dressing on the side – however, I feel the layered salad top to bottom is much more dramatic and easier to transport.

Southwest Layered Salad

1 – 10 oz. Bag	Salad Greens --- Romaine or Iceberg or Mixed (about 6 cups)
2 Cups	Halved cherry or grape tomatoes or chopped garden tomatoes
1 Cup	Yellow Bell Pepper, chopped
2 Cups	Southwestern Cooked Chicken Strips (see below)
1 - 14.5 oz. Can	Black Beans or Pinto Beans, rinsed and drained
¼ Cup	Fresh Cilantro, chopped, or more to taste
1-2 Cups	Corn Chips or Crisp Tortilla Strips, broken in pieces
1 ½ Cups	Shredded Pepper Jack or Cheddar or Colby Cheese
½ Cup	Green Onions, sliced
2 Cups	Southwest Blended Dressing (see Below)

Garnish: Before serving, can top dressing with additional shredded Pepper Jack Cheese, sliced green onion, and chopped cilantro.

Choose from one of these Southwest Blended Dressings:

Creamy Chipotle Dressing:

In a blender or food processor, blend one canned Chipotle Pepper, chopped, with a tsp. of Adobo Sauce (or more peppers or adobo to taste) with 2 Cups of Mayonnaise – taste and adjust seasoning. Chipotles are smoked jalapenos and the adobo sauce has vinegar in it, so the combination of the two makes a delicious creamy dressing with a little heat – depending on how many peppers you add – start with one.

Salsa Ranch Dressing:

In a blender, combine ¼ Cup of your favorite Salsa (drained well) with 2 Cups of a thick Ranch dressing/dip for a great Southwest Dressing – make sure you keep it thick – can also add a dash of ground cumin and chili pepper to the salsa if you wish before adding to the Ranch Dressing/Dip.

Avocado Cumin Dressing:

In a blender, combine 2 large avocados, peeled and chopped, 1 cup sour cream, 1 cup mayonnaise, 3-4 tablespoons lemon juice, ½ Teaspoon granulated garlic, 1 tsp. ground cumin, ½ teaspoon Kosher salt, and ¼ Tsp. Cayenne Pepper.

Southwest Chicken Strips:

You can either purchase these in the Meat Department, but I prefer to make my own. You can either grill boneless, skinless chicken breasts – brushed with a little olive oil and sprinkled with the Southwest Rub below – then cut into bite size pieces, or you can simmer (poach) chicken breasts in water to which you have added some of the rub – then cut into bite size pieces and toss immediately with more rub – refrigerate until you are ready to create your layered salad.

Southwest Rub:

2 Tab.	Chili Powder
1 Tab.	Paprika
1 Tab.	Dried Oregano
1 Tab.	Ground Cumin
2 Tsp.	Dried Thyme
2 Tsp.	Granulated Garlic
1 Tab.	Kosher Salt
1 Tsp.	Freshly Ground Pepper
½ Tsp.	Cayenne Pepper or to taste for hotness

Combine all ingredients above and store in airtight container.

SALAD INGREDIENT VARIATIONS:

If you look at the original ingredient list, you will notice that I kept in mind alternating colors and adding flavors that compliment one another. That said, I have also used the following ingredients in addition to or in place of the original list:

Chopped avocado (toss with a little fresh lime or lemon juice to keep from discoloring), roasted corn kernels, chopped hot peppers, sliced black olives or a selection from Jungle Jim's Olive Bar, grated carrots, sliced mushrooms, orange slices, or any other vegetable you like .

You can also omit the chicken for a delicious no-meat dinner or to serve as a delicious side dish.

DIRECTIONS ON CREATING THE SALAD:

Layer the ingredients above (or make your own substitutions keeping in mind color and flavor combinations) in order starting at the bottom of a clear, flat-bottom glass bowl, ending at the very top with one of the dressings. Cover and refrigerate until serving time. Garnish if desired before serving. Toss or let everyone dig in!

You can make this ahead of time and it's ready to serve when you are and it travels easy to your event or picnic – colorful, nutritious, delicious, and fun!!

Thanks for watching!! Happy Summer!
Jungle Jim's Margie Potts