

STORY BY JENNIFER STREISAND PHOTOS BY DAVID HARMOND

# SUMMER SUMMER SALADS



Grilled chicken salad from Bluefin Bistro in downtown Lafayette.

Tasting the first salad of the season made from fresh, seasonal produce is confirmation that the good weather has finally arrived. The freedom that comes with being outdoors can inspire you to try different things with the annual tradition of making summer salads.

“The reason I like salads is that you are open to experiment with a multitude of ingredients to create a salad that is perfect for your tastes,” says Neil Moseley, owner of Pleasant Acre Farms in Clarks Hill. Moseley, who operates the farm that is dedicated to producing vegetables, is a regular vendor at the Lafayette Farmers Market, the Sagamore West Farmers Market and the Purdue Campus Market.

Linda Widmer, owner of the Baker’s Peak Deli Caterers & Bakeshop in West Lafayette, also is relaxed about the quantities of ingredients when making salads to serve during the lunch hour at her restaurant in the Bell Plaza on Sagamore Parkway West.

The deli and bake shop is known for its fresh ingredients and offers a few different salads on the menu.

“You know our chicken salad is very popular, and people love just a scoop of chicken salad on a lettuce leaf, and a side of fruit. They love that, and one of our homemade rolls, white or wheat.”

During the summer, there are some varieties of lettuce that grow much better than others, and therefore are conducive to making a tastier salad, Moseley notes.

“Most lettuces do not perform well during the months of late July, August and early September,” he says. “Lettuces will tend to become bitter and go to seed during hot weather.”

Some types of lettuce that are better to grow in the summer are Nevada, Tiede, Summertime Iceberg, and other lettuces that are marked as heat resistant, adds Moseley.

“My favorite salad is a combination of the varieties Nevada and Tiede lettuces. Nevada is a green Batavian variety and is also wonderful for wraps. Tiede is a dark variety. I also like to include our zesty salad mix, which is a combination of slightly spicy greens.” Moseley adds vegetables, dried cranberries, walnuts and diced turkey or ham to complete the salad.

While most lettuces don’t grow well during the late summer months, it is the time to raise tomatoes, cucumbers, edamame and sweet corn.

“These are wonderful additions to a fresh cut salad mix,” he says.

By choosing to make his living owning and operating a vegetable farm, Moseley is extending his passion for the land—and the arrival of spring and summer—to the community and to consumers. He was raised on a farm where his parents grew corn, soybeans, and had a swine operation. Although his father has retired, the farm in Southern Tippecanoe County still is in the family with his younger brother and partner managing the crops.

Purchasing produce at the farmers market is one way to better ensure a healthy diet, and it gives consumers the opportunity to find out how the product was raised by speaking directly with the farmers.

A tip for keeping greens fresh is to put them in an ice bath as soon as possible after you get them, and take them out when you are ready to serve the salad, says Bryan Price, head chef at the Bluefin Bistro in Lafayette.

Some of the favorite summer salads served at the Bluefin Bistro are a scallop salad—which includes mesclun greens, bay scallops, cucumbers and tomatoes, and is served with the restaurant’s house dressing—a tuna tataki salad, which is an ahi tuna served rare, and caprese salad, which is made with tomatoes and mozzarella cheese.

Although not frequently thought of as a dessert, some salads can be the sweet finishing touch. Carolyn Vanderkolk of Lafayette makes an apple salad with chocolate and whipped cream during the summer.

“When I make my simple apple salad, I seem to never make enough. I am always putting another one together,” she says.

At the Baker’s Peak, Widmer and her daughter, manager Ashley Miller, determine which salads are best to serve during the seasons based on collective tastes.

“We try and use the fresh produce that’s fresh that season. In the summer we make a strawberry walnut salad, and we just make them up. We think, ‘What do we like,’ what do we think our customers would like, and we do that.” ❧



# RECIPES

## from the garden

### Tiede-Nevada Chef Salad

(Neil Moseley, owner, Pleasant Acre Farms, Clarks Hill)

- Head of Tiede lettuce (dark leaf)
- Head of Nevada lettuce (Batavian)
- 4 oz. zesty green mix (mustard, arugula, sorrel, chervil)
- ¼-½ cup diced carrots
- ¼-½ cup diced green onions
- ¼-½ cup diced radishes
- ½ cup broccoli or cauliflower
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup roasted walnuts
- 1 cup chopped turkey, ham or bacon
- Fresh ground pepper to taste

Shred lettuce and add green mix, vegetables, cranberries, walnuts and turkey, ham or bacon. Adjust ingredients to taste. Try different tastes by substituting a variety of fruits, nuts and vegetables. Top with your favorite French dressing.

### Caprese Salad

(Bryan Price, head chef, Bluefin Bistro, Lafayette)

- 2-3 large vine ripe roma tomatoes, sliced ¼ inch thick
- ½ lb. fresh mozzarella cheese (buffalo mozzarella or any type)
- ¼ cup fresh basil, julienne or cut in thin strips

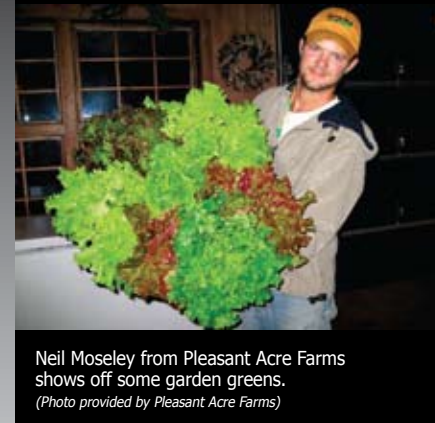
Layer tomato/mozzarella and repeat until all of the ingredients are used, and drape the basil strips across the layers. Use a reduced balsamic glaze on top for a concentrated flavor.

### Tuna Tataki Salad

(Bryan Price, Bluefin Bistro, Lafayette)

- 5 oz. tuna (ahi tuna, sushi-grade tuna)
- 4-5 oz. washed and dried mesclun greens
- 1 thinly sliced red onion
- Julienne red and yellow bell peppers or in strips

Heat a pan or flat surface until very hot, and sear the tuna steaks for about 30 seconds to 1 minute on each side. Remove the tuna and cool in an ice bath. Slice the tuna thinly. Place sliced tuna across the greens, onions and peppers. Use an Asian vinaigrette dressing.



Neil Moseley from Pleasant Acre Farms shows off some garden greens. (Photo provided by Pleasant Acre Farms)

### Strawberry Walnut Salad

(Linda Widmer, owner, Baker's Peak Deli Caterers & Bakeshop, West Lafayette)

- Green leaf lettuce
- Strawberries
- Walnuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Raspberry vinaigrette dressing
- Parmesan cheese to taste

Mix the ingredients using quantities suited for your serving size. Sprinkle parmesan cheese on top.

### Simple Apple Salad

(Carolyn Vanderkolk, Lafayette resident)

- 1 apple, cut up
- 2 large Snickers bars cut into pieces
- Whipped topping to taste
- Additional fruit (optional)

Mix the cut-up apple and Snickers, and add as much whipped topping as you desire.



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