

A Pretty Classic Cobb Salad

Serves 4–6

While I do hate following rules, sometimes it's nice to color inside the lines. To qualify as a Cobb Salad, the salad must have certain ingredients or else it's simply just a large salad, and I am happy to oblige (as long as tomato is optional in the colder months and I give all my avocado away and serve the blue cheese on the side for those who don't care for it). While it can be stressful to assemble a LARGE SALAD like this (so many steps/components), it is nice to treat it like a relaxing project, no hectic rushing, perhaps breaking up some of the steps over two days if you can't imagine taking 45 minutes to make one salad.

Not for nothing, this shallot/mustard dressing is a great all-purpose recipe to have on hand for greens and salads of all shapes and sizes, as well as roasted vegetables, cooked grains, perfectly cooked fish, etc. It's tangy and vibrant with enough acidity to make you feel truly alive.

Ingredients

For the dressing:

1 small shallot, thinly sliced or finely chopped

2 tablespoons red or white wine vinegar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons dijon or whole grain mustard

2 tablespoons bacon fat (optional)

2 tablespoons olive oil

For the salad and assembly:

1 pound thick-cut bacon (you could do less, but why)

2 (about 1 pound) boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1 head romaine or 3–4 heads little gem lettuce, tough outer leaves removed, the rest torn into large pieces (or chopped)

½–1 avocado, thinly sliced or chopped

4–6 ounces blue (or feta*) cheese, crumbled

3–4 large eggs, soft, medium or hard boiled**

¼ cup finely chopped chives

2 tablespoons coarsely chopped tarragon or parsley

¼ pound ripe tomatoes (but only if they're in season), sliced into wedges

***No, this is not traditional, but I wouldn't let your dislike of blue cheese get in the way of you not making this salad.**

****For this salad I like a medium boil. I bring a small pot of water to a boil, add my eggs and boil for 7 minutes. Remove from the water, let run under cool water a minute or two and that's it. This is a very good not-too-jammy but not chalky egg.**

Instructions

1. For the vinaigrette: Combine shallot, vinegar and lemon in a medium bowl; season with salt and pepper and let sit a few minutes to lightly pickle the shallot. Add mustard and olive oil, stir to combine (you can use a whisk for this but a fork will be fine); season again with salt and pepper and set aside. There! A lovely vinaigrette.
2. For the Salad: Cook the bacon, flipping occasionally, in a large skillet over medium heat until crispy, 8–10 minutes depending on thickness. Using tongs, transfer bacon to a paper towel lined plate, leaving about ⅓ cup of the fat in the skillet (I like to save any extra fat and whisk a little into the vinaigrette, or use it to sauté vegetables or fry eggs the next day). Once the bacon is cooled, chop or crumble and set aside.
3. Season chicken on both sides with salt and pepper. Return the skillet with bacon fat to medium heat. Cook chicken until cooked through and nicely golden brown on both sides, about 4 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board until cool enough to either chop, slice or shred by hand into bite-sized pieces; set aside.
4. Spoon a little of your lovely vinaigrette over the tomatoes, give them a toss and set aside so they can get all nice and juicy.
5. Arrange lettuce on a large serving platter or large bowl and top with half your herbs. Spoon half the vinaigrette over and season with salt and pepper; give it a nice toss around. Arrange avocado, blue cheese, halved eggs, crumbled bacon, chicken and dressed tomatoes around in whatever pattern or not-pattern you like. Scatter with the remaining herbs and spoon over remaining vinaigrette.

DO AHEAD: Vinaigrette can be made 5 days ahead, stored tightly wrapped or sealed in the refrigerator.