

Fresh Green Beans with Watercress and Tomatoes, Oil and Lemon Dressing

Serves 8

Original recipe by Julia Child; courtesy of Sur La Table Chef Lynne Just, for demo on August 12, 2016

2 ½ pounds fresh green beans, trimmed and blanched
Salt and pepper
2 or 3 bunches watercress, or 1 head romaine

For the dressing:

1 lemon
1 small clove garlic (optional)
1 teaspoon prepared mustard, Dijon type
6 or more tablespoons olive oil or salad oil
2 medium-size mild red onions, or 1 bunch scallions
1 quart cherry tomatoes, or 3-4 ripe red regular tomatoes

Prepare the beans in the morning, wrap in a clean towel and then in a plastic bag, and refrigerate. Also remove tough stems from watercress, wash the cress, and fold in a clean towel and plastic; refrigerate (or if using romaine, wash, separating leaves, wrap like the cress, and refrigerate).

An hour or so before serving, prepare the dressing as follows. Cut the zest (yellow part of peel) off half the lemon and mince very fine. Place in a small mortar or heavy bowl with the salt; puree in the optional garlic. Pound into a fine paste with a pestle or the end of a wooden spoon, then beat in the mustard, a tablespoon of juice from the lemon, and the oil. Carefully correct the seasoning—dressing should not be too acid, only mildly so because of the wine you will be serving with the dinner.

Peel the red onions and slice into thin rings; toss in a bowl with the dressing (or mix chopped scallions with the dressing); cover and refrigerate. Halve the cherry tomatoes, place cut side up in a dish, and salt lightly (or peel, slice, and lightly salt regular tomatoes); cover and refrigerate. If you are using romaine rather than cress, gather leaves by handfuls and slice crosswise into 3/8-inch (1-cm) julienne strips; refrigerate in a plastic bag.

Shortly before guests are to arrive, arrange the watercress or romaine in the bottom of a wide salad bowl or platter and toss with a sprinkling of salt. Toss the blanched beans in a bowl with the onions or scallions and dressing, taste carefully for seasoning, and arrange attractively over the cress or romaine, with the tomatoes around the edges. Baste tomatoes and beans with dressing left in bean bowl. Cover and keep cool until serving time.

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