

Mediterranean Grain Salad

Right now, throughout most parts of the United States, it's the dead of summer, and we've been going through a heat wave. Here in the Midwest, we've not only had temperatures soaring near 100 degrees, but it's also been incredibly, miserably humid. If you live near here, then you know what I'm talking about. It's that feeling that when you open your door that someone hit you with a wet blanket.

Needless to say, I don't like to cook a lot in this weather, so I've been relying quite a bit on salads, cans of tuna, and dishes that use up leftovers I scrounge up in the fridge. Most of these are passable, with the occasional standout, and every once in awhile I make something that leads me to asking myself what I was thinking. The one I'm sharing this week is one of the standouts.

I love a good salad, especially on a hot day, and one of my favorite types is a grain salad like this one. I had a mixture of quinoa and wild rice from a previous meal, and I then searched for something to go with it. A stray cucumber, some cherry tomatoes, and feta were the perfect accompaniment. For protein, I added a can of chickpeas, but you could easily add leftover chicken or shrimp. Some olives added a savory note, so now all I needed was a dressing, which is where this recipe shines.

For the dressing, I tried avocado oil instead of the usual go-to olive oil, and it was fantastic. I wanted to keep it simple, but flavorful, so I just added the juice and zest of a lemon, some mustard and a clove of garlic. It really brought the flavors of the salad together, and added brightness to the saltiness of the other ingredients.

This is one of those meals that comes together quickly, tastes amazing, and is filling and nutritious. Add these to the fact that I didn't have to turn my house into a sauna to make it, and it's going on my favorite recipe list for sure!

Mediterranean Grain Salad

Salad:

2 cups cooked grains of your choice, such as wild rice, quinoa, or farro, chilled

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

1 can chickpeas, drained

1 cucumber, diced

1/2 cup sliced and pitted kalamata olives

3-4 ounces crumbled feta cheese

1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley

Dressing:

1/2 cup extra-virgin avocado oil

Juice and zest of 1 lemon

1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 clove garlic, minced

Sea salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste

Put all of the salad ingredients into a large bowl and toss well.

Put the dressing ingredients in a jar and shake until well combined.

Toss with the salad before serving.

Leftovers can be stored in the fridge for a day or two.