



Bob's Radicc-ulous Caesar Salad

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Salads come and go like fashion, but Caesar salad never goes out of style. And for good reason. A well-made Caesar dressing has it all: the kick of fresh garlic, the richness of a raw egg yolk, the zing of lemon juice, the earthy nuttiness of Parmigiano Reggiano, umami-centric

anchovies, and of course those crunchy croutons. After you've tasted the real deal, it's hard to go back. I included a traditional Caesar in my very first cookbook 25 years ago, as taught to me by a friend who made it tableside at the restaurant he worked at to put himself through college. With the youthful bravado of someone who had just mastered a new technique, I called it "sacrilegious" to use anything but a hand hewn, unfinished maple bowl.

Over time, I've loosened my uncompromising approach to the method. To simplify the process, I developed a blender technique that delivers the same consistency without the bowl—or the requisite muscle power. I've also toyed with the proportions of the ingredients to up the pungency of the dressing, and switched my allegiance from croutons to rustic fried breadcrumbs that distribute a pleasing crunch in every bite. And while romaine lettuce may be the official green of Caesar salads, there are many options ranging from kale to Brussels sprouts. My current fave is radicchio which add a pleasingly bitter counterpoint to the richness of the dressing.

Individually, each of these modifications makes a subtle difference, but together they create a bold new statement, that dare I say is ridiculously good.

Makes 4-6 servings

Ingredients:

FOR THE SALAD:

3 large heads radicchio, leaves separated and roughly torn

FOR THE DRESSING:

3 garlic cloves, minced

5 anchovies (or 1 heaping teaspoon anchovy paste) + 1 tablespoon anchovy oil

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1½ teaspoons red wine vinegar

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

5 tablespoons sunflower oil, safflower oil, or light olive oil



- 1 egg yolk*
- 1 cup fried breadcrumbs (see recipe that follows)
- ½ cup (about 2 ounces) freshly grated Parmigiana-Reggiano

Method:

Make the dressing:

1. To a blender, add garlic, anchovy, anchovy oil, Dijon, lemon juice, Worcestershire, vinegar, salt and pepper. Purée.
2. With the blender on, very slowly drizzle in oil.
3. After oil is incorporated, add yolk and pulse a few times. Taste for salt, acid balance and seasonings, and adjust if desired. Reserve.
4. Make fried breadcrumbs using method below
5. To a large bowl, add the radicchio, half of the dressing, fried bread crumbs (holding back a bit to garnish). Toss.
6. Add the Parmigiano (holding back a bit to garnish).
7. Toss again and add more dressing as needed until the radicchio is well dressed, but not too wet.
8. Finish with a dusting of Parmigiano and breadcrumbs. Serve immediately.

Fried Breadcrumbs:

1. Get into the habit of saving your leftover bits of bread in a paper bag. If you want to make breadcrumbs and don't have any stale bread on hand, put a few slices of rustic bread into a toaster oven or oven at 250°F and bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until rock hard.
2. Put your stale or oven-dried bread in a plastic bag and smash it with a blunt object until it's reduced to coarse breadcrumbs. Alternatively, you can smash it in a large mortar and pestle.
3. To make one cup of fried breadcrumbs, transfer a cup of the uncooked breadcrumbs to a pan over low heat. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil or leftover oil from an anchovy tin or jar.
4. Stir occasionally and watchfully for about 10 minutes, or until crumbs are golden brown.
5. Store leftovers in an airtight bag or jar.

Note: *Raw eggs should not be served to anyone with a compromised immune system.