

cooking with confidence

# dressings & salsas

Have you every wondered how they make “no fat” or “low cal” salad dressings? Well I certainly have. A salad dressing without oil is an oxymoron in my book ... I mean isn't Paul Newman an actor?

**MAKING** salad dressings at home is easy once you know the basic formula, then you can use real foods that are surely healthier than the suspicious ingredients of the supermarket variety salad dressing.

The secret formula you need to remember is one part acid to two parts oil because this provides the right balance so the dressing is neither sour nor oily.

Now acid means vinegar or lemon and lime juice. The vinegar could be red wine, rice wine, balsamic, garden variety or some fancy flavoured number – you know the one you get for Christmas that sits proudly on display in the kitchen that you never quite know what to do with!

Oil could be blended veggie, olive, peanut or any nut oil. This formula of 1:2 is important when making salsas too – you need one part dressing to two parts ingredients. It's important to be culturally aware with salad dressings. East meets west is a little tricky, stick with combinations true to original cuisines, for example lemon juice and olive oil, white vinegar with vegetable oil, rice vinegar with peanut oil etc.

This recipe is the one we make at home, there is some contention whether it's mine or my wife's (aka her grandmothers).

The kids like it more when Gabi makes it, so I guess she wins with salad dressing as well as mashed potato. But you should see the butter that goes into the mash! Like my previous two columns there is no specific measurements for this recipe, it's all about knowing a couple of secrets – learning to cook by knowledge and taste.



Craig Squire is the chef and director of the award-winning Red Ochre Grill in Shields St.



## Seared pineapple salsa

1 pineapple, peeled and cut into rounds  
1 medium red chilli  
1 small bunch coriander or vietnamese mint  
1 small knob ginger  
1 part rice vinegar to 2 parts peanut oil (again using the dressing formula)  
Fish sauce  
Sesame oil

Sear sliced pineapple on barbecue plate to caramelize both sides, remove to cool.

When cool cut into small dice. Finely chop chilli, coriander and ginger and add to pineapple. And vinegar and peanut oil to cover and stir through. Flavour with a splash of fish sauce and sesame oil. It can keep for weeks in the refrigerator. This has been a restaurant staple for many years, goes well with baked or grilled fish and seared scallops or oysters as a canapé.

## Mediterranean vegetable and bocconcini salsa

This colourful salsa goes well with grilled fish like tuna, swordfish or pan-fried sardine fillets, grilled lamb and is great as an antipasto item.

100g marinated sun-dried tomatoes  
100 g bocconcini  
1/2 red onion  
50g pitted kalamata olives  
1 grilled zucchini  
Capers to taste  
10 torn leaves fresh basil  
60ml balsamic vinegar  
120ml olive oil  
2 cloves garlic  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Slice sun-dried tomatoes and olives lengthway in halves, dice onion, place in mixing bowl. Slice zucchini in strips and grill or pan fry, cut bocconcini in halves and add to above. Add desired quantity of capers, balsamic, pepper and basil. Finely slice garlic and bring to simmer in olive oil, pour over all ingredients and gently stir over. Best served fresh with a pinot noir or pinot gris.



Pictures by Mike Watt



Before shaking

After shaking

## Our house dressing

Use a 500ml jar with a good sealing lid

1 part white vinegar  
2 parts sunflower oil  
1 spoon english mustard or to taste  
Salt and freshly ground pepper (plenty)  
1 egg  
1 clove fresh garlic (crushed)

Shake really well.

Adding fresh basil, a touch of dried herbs, chilli or your favourite spice will work well.

Keep refrigerated in the jar.



## Dressings for oysters

Oysters are at their best this time of year, with cold water currents keeping them firm and tasty. If you like oysters, but not really raw and yet like me agree cooking them is a waste, try them with a dressing instead. By marinating the oyster in the dressing for a couple of minutes, the acid will “cook” the oyster lightly, making them perfectly flavoured yet still natural.

## Balsamic, soya and black pepper

Mix one part Japanese soya sauce to two parts balsamic vinegar, add finely chopped red onion, a little sugar and loads of fresh ground pepper to your taste.

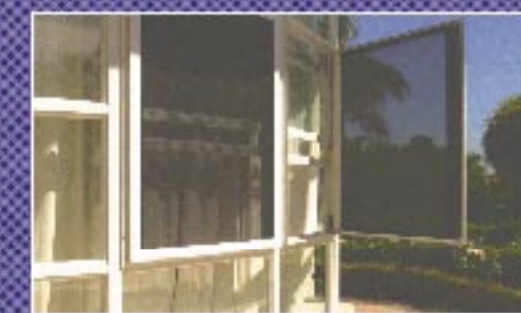
## Sesame and shallot dressing

200ml sweet chilli sauce  
4 chopped shallots  
100ml sesame oil  
100ml rice vinegar  
40ml fish sauce  
50ml mirin  
White sesame seeds

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