



NICHOLAS RIZZO'S CAESAR SALAD

This popular dish was originated in 1924 by Italian chef Caesar Cardini at his restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico and was prepared and served right at the table. Rumor has it that one night he created this dressing out of leftover ingredients when kitchen supplies were running low.

For those of you who are not fans of anchovies, you may be interested in knowing the original recipe for this salad did not include them, but did include the Worcestershire sauce (which contains anchovies). Interestingly, the salad is made with anchovies at the original restaurant today.



What about those raw eggs? The original recipe may have called for coddled whole eggs, which some feel provides a creamier texture. (To coddle an egg bring a small pot of water to a fast boil and gently place the egg into it and cook for 45 seconds. Then cool in cold water.) Some chefs use a whole egg or two egg yolks at room temperature. Any of the variations on egg preparation are acceptable and up to individual preference. If there are concerns about using raw eggs use the coddled egg method or buy pasteurized eggs.

This recipe is an adaptation of several recipes. Aside from ingredient amount changes, two changes from the original ingredient list include substituting Dijon mustard for dry mustard and the addition of a small amount of white wine vinegar. Also, while the original was prepared tableside in a large wooden bowl, I've opted for a blender for convenience and thorough mixing.

Serving Size: 4

Romaine Lettuce

1 large head romaine lettuce or one large package of romaine hearts

1. Trim the base off the romaine heads. Separate the leaves and discard the coarse outer leaves. Wash, and drain the remaining leaves. Slice into smaller, 2-inch sections if desired.

Note: leafy vegetables should be washed by completely submersing them in cool water, which removes any loose dirt particles. Even if a package states "pre-washed" it's still recommended to wash them.

2. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to crisp the leaves.

Note: the salad was originally served with whole leaves, providing a nice presentation as pictured, but smaller pieces are often more practical.

Croutons

Ingredients

1 garlic clove

Pinch of salt

3 tablespoons virgin olive oil

French baguette cut up into 1/2 inch slices (about 8 slices) or into 3/4 inch cubes (2 cups)

Directions

1. Mince or press the garlic clove and combine with the oil and salt in a bowl. Toss the bread with enough olive oil mixture to coat, but not drench. Sprinkle lightly with salt and spread out on a rimmed baking sheet.
2. Bake approximately 10 to 15 minutes at 350° or until just golden brown. Halfway through the baking time, give the pan a shake to make sure the croutons toast evenly. (Croutons can be made the day before and stored in an airtight container at room temperature.)

Caesar Salad Dressing

Ingredients

2 large cloves garlic

3 anchovy filets*

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

2 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 egg yolks (at room temperature) or one coddled egg

1 cup extra virgin olive oil

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, shredded or shaved, for garnish

Directions

1. Combine the garlic, anchovies, Dijon mustard, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, white wine vinegar, black pepper, egg yolks, and just a drop or two of the olive oil – blend well in a blender.

Note: adding a drop of the olive oil at this stage aids in creating the emulsion later.

2. Turn the blender down to a slower speed. Slowly drizzle the oil in a steady stream until it's a bit lighter than mayonnaise consistency. If you add the oil too quickly, the dressing will separate and not emulsify.
3. Pour the dressing into a large bowl and stir in the grated Parmesan cheese and any needed salt. Coat or toss the romaine leaves in the dressing until thoroughly coated.
4. Divide the salad between chilled plates and dress with croutons and the shredded/shaved Parmesan cheese and freshly ground black pepper. If you want to be fancy serve with chilled forks.

* Use only good-quality Spanish or Portuguese anchovies in your dressing. Anchovy paste may be substituted (approximately two inches squeezed from the tube will provide the equivalent taste of one anchovy fillet). More anchovies may be added according to taste.

** Fresh lemon juice is essential. Some chefs squeeze the lemon through cheesecloth or a strainer into a small bowl to ensure that only the juice ends up in the salad.