

04/15/09 - Iceberg Lettuce is not Your Only Choice

What goes in a salad? A little of this and a little of that, but 90 percent of the time it starts with crisp, green lettuce. The question is what type of greens do you like on your salad? Let's look at some of the different types of lettuce one can use to make the perfect salad.

Building the perfect salad takes time. You work from the bottom up and all the fixings need to be just right. Lettuce is not only the building block of your salad but it makes up about 50 to 60 percent of your dish. Therefore finding the right type of lettuce to satisfy your taste buds is very important.

Iceberg lettuce usually tops the list because it is the most common and the easiest to find. Most restaurant salads begin with iceberg lettuce. Although this type of lettuce has very little taste it is still considered one of the favorite picks. With all the other ingredients you add you won't even notice there's not much taste.

Next in line is Bibb lettuce. This type of lettuce has a slightly sweet taste. It also has a rich green color. This type of lettuce works great as bedding for chicken or tuna salad as well as fruit salads.

Romaine lettuce is used most often in Cesar salads. It is a little more expensive than iceberg lettuce. Its mild taste makes it a great lettuce for salads. Romaine lettuce is a little darker in color than iceberg lettuce. The leaves are long and they have a fibrous spine that runs the entire length of each leaf.

A bitter tasting lettuce such as Frisee is most often found in mixed greens. This

lettuce is often mixed with Mesclun which also has a bitter taste. These lettuce leaves look like they have been chewed by a rabbit before being packaged. They are a medium green in color and the leaves are long and ragged looking.

Other types of greens include spinach and radicchio. Spinach has a wonderful flavor and a brilliant dark green color. One of the benefits of spinach is that color. Antioxidants are found in these darker colored leaves. Beta carotene is in abundance and can help in warding off free radicals in the body as well.

Radicchio is a lettuce that looks more like a cabbage. Although the leaves are long like lettuce the color and texture are more like that of a cabbage. The red to purple color and the white spine that runs through leaves give this type of lettuce the appearance of a cabbage. Radicchio is rather bitter and works better when mixed with other types of lettuce than alone.

Last but not least is endive. Endive is a Belgian variety of lettuce. Dark green in color the leaves are short and have a tendency to curl. Due to its mild taste, endive is chosen often for salads.

What type of greens do you prefer? These are just a few that you can mix and match to create the perfect salad base. Try something different the next time you prepare a salad, you might just find one you love.