



Joe and I went to our friends' house for a birthday celebration. They surprised me with a decorated wine glass that declared me "Queen of Everything!" Ha ha! We offered to bring an appetizer since they were in charge of the entrée, which was – our choice – pizza! Pizza and friends go together just like... pizza and salad! I wanted to combine the elements of salad into an appetizer, so I created Salad on a Stick. Sounds simple, because, it is! Simple can be surprisingly fun. And no forks needed.

Salad on a Stick

I wrote this recipe a couple years ago, and saw something similar appear on a food TV show recently. Ahead of my time...!

The key to Salad on a Stick is to buy / prepare quality ingredients that pack flavor and are roughly the same size. KEEP IT SIMPLE. Too many ingredients become too complicated and won't fit nicely on a cocktail pick. Choose your fixings carefully to balance color, taste and theme. I captured the flavors of two favorites: Italian and Greek salads. The possibilities, however, are endless. I encourage you to try my combinations and to experiment with your own.

It's also important to serve a dressing that goes with Salad on a Stick. I made a lemon vinaigrette that worked for both – again, to keep things simple. I served it in a small bottle so that everyone could just drizzle a little over their sticks. It adds an element of interaction and fun to the experience!

Ingredients:

Buy in a quantity that meets your needs. Each pick will have only 1 of each ingredient, so choose quality products.

Italian: Small mozzarella balls, prosciutto, grape (or small cherry) tomatoes.

Greek: English cucumber, kalamata olives, feta cheese

You will also need cocktail picks. They are a little longer than ordinary toothpicks. You want your ingredients to almost fill the pick but be small enough, together, for that one perfect bite.

The mozzarella, tomatoes and olives will be left whole.

For the Italian Salad on a Stick: Pat dry the mozzarella balls, as this will help the prosciutto to stick. Cut the prosciutto into long thin strips. Try to keep the edges tidy. Wrap the prosciutto around the mozzarella ball, and put it on the cocktail stick, toward the top. You can position the ball so that the end of the prosciutto is caught by the pick and therefore anchored. Next, skewer the grape tomato, and there you go! Italian Salad on a Stick.

In season, I might be tempted to add a piece of fresh basil to this, or to make a basil vinaigrette. But I have to say, this very simple version is totally pleasing.

For the Greek Salad on a Stick: Cut the feta into medium bite-sized cubes. The feta is by nature crumbly, so cut a cube that's thick enough to stand up to the cocktail pick. Peel the cucumber, and cut it into long thick planks. I try to avoid the center section that holds the seeds. Cut the cucumber into cubes that are the same size as the feta. Keep proportions in mind. To assemble, slide the feta to the top of the pick, then add the olive (long ways), then add the cucumber. Greek Salad on a Stick.

Extra recipe: Vinaigrette typically is 1 part acid to 3 parts fat, with a pinch of salt and pepper. I like my dressings more acidic. For my lemon vinaigrette, I combined the juice of a lemon (about 3 Tablespoons) with about 5 Tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper. In all honesty, I seldom measure dressings; I just taste until I like it. I also use a finishing olive oil rather than the kind of EVOO that I cook with, because the finishing oil is more tasty in a "raw" preparation. Put the vinaigrette into a small bottle with a lid, and when you serve it, just shake and drizzle. It's fun – not fancy – and perfect for a casual pizza party. You can also buy prepared infused olive oils that would work fine for this recipe.

Friends. Food. Fun. Life is good.

First published by Judy on February 12, 2014