

# The key to a crisp chopped salad

By America's Test Kitchen

A chopped salad, where every ingredient is cut into pieces of about the same size, offers the perfect mixture of flavors and textures in every bite. However, some vegetables get watery and soggy when you chop and dress them, and they require extra attention.

In this summery salad, we first salted the tomatoes and cucumbers to draw out their excess moisture before adding them to the salad. Seeding the cucumbers and quartering the tomatoes exposed more surface area to the salt for even better results.

Letting all the vegetables marinate in the vinaigrette for a few minutes before adding the lettuce intensified their flavor. Along with cucumbers and tomatoes, we chose sweet yellow bell pepper, red onion and peppery radishes and tossed them all with chopped romaine lettuce hearts. Be sure to add the lettuce just before serving, or it will turn soggy.



JOE KELLER/AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

## Summer vegetable chopped salad

**Servings:** 4

**Start to finish:** 30 minutes

**3** cucumbers, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded and cut into 1/2-inch pieces

**1 1/2** pounds cherry tomatoes, quartered

Salt and pepper

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

1 garlic clove, minced

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 yellow bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/2-inch pieces

1 small red onion, chopped fine

**8** ounces radishes, trimmed and sliced thin

3/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

1 romaine lettuce heart (6 ounces), cut into 1-inch pieces

**1. Toss cucumbers** and tomatoes

with 1 teaspoon salt and let drain in colander for 15 minutes.

**2. Whisk vinegar, garlic,** 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper together in large bowl. Whisking constantly, drizzle in oil. Add drained cucumbers and tomatoes, bell pepper, onion, radishes and parsley and toss to coat. Let salad sit for at least five minutes or up to 20 minutes.

**3. Add lettuce** and gently toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

### Variations:

■ **Mediterranean chopped salad:** Reduce cucumber to one cucumber and substitute 10 ounces grape tomatoes for cherry tomatoes. Reduce vinegar to 3 tablespoons and olive oil to 3 tablespoons. Omit bell pepper and radishes. Reduce onion to 1/2 of an onion and parsley to 1/2 cup. Add 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed, and 1/2 cup chopped pitted

Kalamata olives with cucumber and tomatoes in step 2. Add 1 cup crumbled feta with lettuce.

■ **Pear and cranberry chopped salad:** Omit tomatoes. Reduce cucumber to one cucumber. Substitute 3 tablespoons sherry vinegar for red wine vinegar and reduce olive oil to 3 tablespoons. Substitute red bell pepper for yellow bell pepper. Omit radishes and parsley. Reduce onion to 1/2 of an onion. Add one ripe but firm pear, halved, cored and cut into 1/4-inch pieces, and 1/2 cup dried cranberries with cucumber in step 2. Add 1 cup crumbled blue cheese and 1/2 cup chopped, toasted pistachios with lettuce.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 215 calories; 129 calories from fat; 15 g fat (2 g saturated); 0 g trans fats; 0 mg cholesterol; 334 mg sodium; 19 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 9 g sugar; 4 g protein.