



The Edible Garden with Alison Alexander

At this time of the year, along with Lebanese and Apple Cucumbers I like to plant some seeds of small pickling cucumbers. I pick them when they are only 5cm and pickle them in the French method of Cornichons. This pickle has no sugar and I like to use these in salads, in particular a potato salad and best of all, to accompany a terrine or cheese board. Their downside is that you will have to pick them every day to obtain the desired size – leave them for an extra day or two and they will become salad cucumbers! This month's salad uses asparagus, but it can be exchanged for some steamed beans.

Smoked Trout, Egg and Radish Salad

1 smoked trout

4 eggs
1 bunch asparagus
1 bunch radish, finely sliced
1 small red onion, finely sliced
400g tin of white beans, rinsed and drained
½ cup mint leaves, torn by hand to avoid turning black
½ cup cornichons, roughly chopped
freshly ground black pepper
salt flakes
Buttermilk Dressing (below)

1. Remove skin and bones from the trout and gently break up the fillets into chevrons. Keep refrigerated whilst preparing the salad.
2. Hard-boil the eggs then peel when cool enough to handle. Cook the asparagus either by steaming or in the microwave. Refresh under cold water immediately then cut into 2.5cm lengths. Place eggs and asparagus in a large mixing bowl with the trout and drizzle with a few spoonfuls of dressing. The salad needs only light mixing to avoid breaking up the eggs and trout too much.

Note: Baby spinach leaves are a good addition to the salad.

Buttermilk Dressing

1 clove garlic, crushed
finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
½ cup buttermilk
2 tablespoons finely grated parmesan
2 tablespoons egg mayonnaise
1 tablespoon each of finely chopped parsley and chives
freshly ground black pepper
sea salt

Place all ingredients in a small bowl and whisk to combine or mix with an electric stick blender. Only add a pinch of salt to start with and taste, then add more if necessary. This dressing will keep a good 10 days in the refrigerator.

This dressing can also be used on:

- Wedges of iceberg lettuce, crisp bacon or pancetta and toasted pine nuts
- Wedges of roasted pumpkin, pitted green olives, basil leaves, roasted macadamias, and soft feta
- Steamed flowerets of broccoli with finely chopped anchovy added to the dressing