

Let Us Enjoy Lettuce

by Bonnie Swank

People often ask us what we do in the wintertime. Well, a farmer's life may slow down a little due to weather but the race is on to get the fields cleaned up and bedded for the next crop, which could either be winter vegetables or a cover crop. Have you ever planted a tomato plant in the same spot year after year and wondered why you couldn't grow a

tomato? You need to plant something different in that spot to replenish the nourishment the tomato leached from the soil. Farmers do the same thing but on a much bigger scale with cover crops. We get the seeds in the ground, hope it rains but not too much, hope the days start to warm up and wait to see if they pop their little heads out of the ground.

Well, the days are now longer and warmer and the conditions perfect for growing lettuce. All those beautiful leafy greens that have spent the winter in warmer places like Arizona have moved back home to flourish in the California sunshine. So get your taste buds ready because I promise you if you buy locally grown lettuce you *will* notice a huge difference in the flavor. Every time I'm in a restaurant asking myself what's missing in this salad, Dick reminds me it's the lettuce. Long trips and cold storage are not friends of lettuce draining them of their sweet crisp flavor. So welcome back lettuce and remember, the Salinas Valley is not called the Salad Bowl for nothing. Enjoy!



good



~ Bonnie and her husband Dick Swank are owners of Swank Farms in Hollister. To learn more visit SwankFarms.com or contact them at: 831-637-4704.

GRILLED DECONSTRUCTED SALAD FROM BONNIE'S KITCHEN

I searched the internet for a grilled salad and didn't come up with one I liked better than mine. This is more of a concept than a recipe so use your imagination and enjoy what I call a Grilled Deconstructed Salad.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 heads Romaine Lettuce split lengthwise
- 4 tomatoes cut in half
- 1-2 red bell peppers
- 2 red onions cut in half
- Olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Salt
- Pepper



DIRECTIONS

Fire up the grill, brush everything with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Put veggies on the grill and cook to desired doneness. Lettuce should have grill marks and onions and peppers should be cooked till tender. Don't over cook the tomatoes or you will have sauce.

Now for the fun part, get a large platter and start to cut your vegetables laying them in a pizza design. Cut your lettuce in 1" cubes and lay them on the platter. Remember your not building a salad but presenting all the elements. Slice the peppers; cube the onion and tomatoes setting them side by side on the platter. If you want you can add kalamata olives and feta cheese. Drizzle the vegetables with olive oil and balsamic vinegar and serve.

Note: For a heartier meal you can add sliced steak, chicken or even grilled prawns. It's all good. Enjoy!

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