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The  
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Issue

cooking **FRESH**

# LET'S GET DRESSED

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Great dressings, like great outfits, favor the bold. They need to be intense, even exaggerated, because they are spread out over a volume of relatively bland or less-seasoned things.

**T**he topic of getting dressed takes me back to my days at Harper's Bazaar, when wearing a bad outfit to work was the surest way to ruin a good day. When you spend your waking hours in a fishbowl of fashionistas, you figure out how to rock a chic look on the fly—mostly out of self-preservation. Fortunately, you pick up some tips along the way. Since I ended up devoting my life to dressing kale and arugula rather than runway models, I've been happy to discover that what I learned in the fashion world applies to the art of dressing veggies, too.

Great dressings, like great outfits, favor the bold. They need to be intense, even exaggerated, because they are spread out over a volume of relatively bland or less-seasoned things. When tasted alone, dressings will often seem too salty or strong, but in the final dish, the bold and the bland will be assimilated in every bite by the taste buds. Dressings should always be piercing and assertive, a swift kick in the khaki pants.

Just like your dark-wash jeans or little black dress, you need some everyday basics in your arsenal that never let you down. My favorite go-to ingredient is anchovies—those ugly harbingers of briny umami complexity and depth. It's no surprise that two of the greatest salad dressing innovations of the last century—Cobb and Caesar—rely on these scrawny, oily fish for their ineffable zing. Whirl them into cold dressings and they are sharp and punchy; melt them into hot dressings and they are sweet and practically untraceable—even to anchovy haters.

But life gets boring on basics alone, which is why a fresh accessory is needed to make the pulse race a little, too. My current culinary crush is kefir. Yes, you heard me: I'm obsessed with sour milk. I once had an equally fervent infatuation with skinny red suspenders, which I wore with everything from pencil skirts to bell-bottoms. But I think this kefir thing will be longer lasting and less likely to get tangled up in my socks.

Kefir is a cultured dairy product, like yogurt, but with more diverse beneficial bacteria and yeasts that hang around being helpful in the gut (yogurt biota mostly just cruise on through). It's tangy and liquid-y enough to be a dressing base by itself, but it's also a perfect addition to vinaigrettes or sauces—imparting silken body and tart zip all at once. Kefir can be used in any recipe that calls for yogurt, buttermilk, sour cream or cream as a naturally lactose-free substitute (all of the lactose is converted to pucker-y lactic acid).

You may not share my love for sour milk and stinky fish. No matter—your own unique style can, and should be, as present on your table as it is in your closet. Don't bother with options that don't make your mouth water, just like you shouldn't wear a pouf skirt if that's not your thing.





## FRESH SPRING PEAS WITH CHIVES AND MINTY “RANCH” DRESSING

This dish works just as well with fresh raw peas, but blanching them makes the color brighter. And the zesty riff on ranch dressing can go on or with so many things: cabbage and radish slaw, simple green salad, lamb chops, wings, crudités.

Serves 4

<b>For the dressing:</b>	2 garlic cloves
½ c. mayo	2 T. apple-cider vinegar
½ c. plain kefir	½ t. salt
½ c. chopped mint	¼ t. pepper
1–2 t. chopped ginger	¼ c. extra-virgin olive oil

Combine the first eight ingredients in a blender and blend on low. Slowly add the oil, then turn the blender to high and blend until the mint is fully pureed—resulting in a beautiful, creamy, bright-green dressing.

<b>For the peas:</b>
1 lb. fresh shelling peas
1 c. dressing
¼ c. chopped chives

To shell the peas, snap off the stem hat, zip the string down the side to open the pod and pop out the sweet green orbs. Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil, then blanch the peas for 2 to 3 minutes. Drain and immerse in a cold-water bath. To serve warm, return the peas to the pot on low heat and dry them out a bit. Toss with the dressing and chopped chives. To serve cold, skip the reheating stage and toss the drained peas with the dressing and chives.

## CRISPY SALAD WITH MERGUEZ SAUSAGE AND KEFIR-HARISSA DRESSING

This salad manages to be intensely flavorful and hearty, yet still bright and refreshing. The hot spice of the sausage and harissa is cooled by the mint and cucumber. It's a great early spring salad, when the weather is shifty as are our appetites.

Serves 4

<b>For the dressing:</b>	½ c. hot harissa (I like the Mina Harissa brand)
2 c. plain kefir	1 t. salt, or to taste
3 garlic cloves, minced	

Whisk together all of the ingredients in a bowl. Seriously, that's it. Set aside.

<b>For the sausage:</b>	2 T. chopped fresh cilantro
¾ t. cumin seeds	2 garlic cloves, minced
¾ t. coriander seeds	2 t. sea salt
¾ t. fennel seeds	1 t. paprika
1 lb. ground lamb	½ t. cayenne

Toast the cumin, coriander and fennel seeds in a hot skillet until fragrant, then grind in a coffee or spice grinder. Place the lamb in a large bowl, add the spices and all the other ingredients, then mash everything together. Heat a skillet to medium-high heat, splash it with a little olive oil, then add the sausage mixture—breaking it up into pieces with a wooden spoon to brown and cook evenly. The sausage should be brown on the outside and slightly pink on the inside. Remove and place on a paper towel to drain.

<b>For the salad:</b>	1 lb. cooked, crumbled merguez sausage
1 English cucumber, diced	Kefir-harissa dressing, to taste
1 bunch mint (chiffonade)	
1 bunch kale, washed, stemmed, finely chopped	

Toss together everything but the dressing in a large stainless bowl (I like the sausage crumbles to be just slightly cooled—warm but not hot.) Drizzle the dressing in a few big circles around the ingredients then use your hands to toss and distribute.





## ROASTED RADISH AND FENNEL WITH BAGNA CAUDA

Bagna cauda is the best thing that ever happened to butter and anchovies.

Serves 4

### For the bagna cauda:

- ¼ c. butter
- ½ c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 anchovies, minced
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ t. red chili flakes (I often add more)
- 2 T. chopped fresh herbs (I like parsley and thyme)
- ¼ t. salt

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Add the olive oil, anchovies, garlic and chili flakes. Let the mixture simmer gently for about 5 to 10 minutes as the anchovies break down and the flavors infuse. Add the fresh herbs, turn off the burner and keep warm.

### For the radish and fennel:

- 1 bunch radishes, halved if small, quartered if big
- 2 fennel bulbs, white part only, halved lengthwise, sliced
- 1 glug olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Squeeze of lemon, to finish
- Crusty bread, for serving

Toss the radish and fennel with a little olive oil, salt and pepper and roast at 400° for about 10 minutes, until it's soft and beginning to brown. Transfer to a serving bowl and ladle ½ cup of the warm bagna cauda over the top. Finish with a squeeze of lemon. Serve with the bread for soaking up the buttery sauce.

## KALE SALAD WITH LEMON-ANCHOVY VINAIGRETTE AND PECORINO CURLS

When I don't know what to do with myself, I make a really simple kale salad with some cheese and a ballsy vinaigrette like this one. You can vary the cheese and add goodies as needed (think: ricotta salata with shaved red onions, dollops of burrata with toasted breadcrumbs, manchego and olives—or whatever strikes your fancy). The bold, briny puckery-ness of this intense vinaigrette stands up well to the formidably cruciferous kale. I prefer a mix of Tuscan (aka dinosaur) kale, which is an heirloom variety and the most nutrient-dense, and curly green kale because it has more loft and holds dressing better.

Serves 4

### For the dressing:

- Juice of 2 lemons
- ½ T. water
- ½ T. Dijon mustard
- 1 T. champagne vinegar
- 9 anchovy fillets
- ½ t. black pepper
- Pinch salt, or to taste
- ¾ c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small shallot or ½ large one, rough-chopped

Combine everything but the oil and shallot in a blender and whirl together. Add the olive oil in a slow and steady stream to emulsify. Add the shallot and briefly pulse to mince and incorporate—don't overblend or it will become sulfurous.

### For the salad:

- 1 bunch (or equivalent if using two varieties) kale, stemmed, washed, chopped
- 4 oz. pecorino Toscano, shaved into curls with a veggie peeler

Toss the kale with the vinaigrette to taste, then toss with half of the cheese curls. Tumble the remaining cheese curls on top, for aesthetic pleasure.

