

grilled tuna salad with vegetables & 3 spicy lemon-basil vinaigrette **serves 4**

The vegetables for this salad are grilled (inside or out), but could also be oven-roasted for 20-30 minutes or so at 400 degrees F. No matter how you cook it, you're eating quickly and happily.

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
- 1 medium eggplant, peeled, and sliced into 1/2-inch rounds
- 2 small zucchini, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds or lengthwise into 1/4" thick slices
- 2 3/4-inch slices of a very large yellow onion
- 2 6-8 ounce thick tuna steaks
- 1/2 cup **each** cherry tomatoes and bocconcini (small mozzarella balls)–about 12 each
- 2 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 1/4 cup Nicoise or kalamata olives
- Juice of half-lemon
- Spicy Lemon-Basil Vinaigrette (recipe below)

Preheat indoor or outdoor grill over medium-high heat. Brush eggplant, zucchini, and onion with olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Grill about 8 minutes, turning once at mid-point. Remove to a plate and set aside. After a few minutes, slice into one-inch pieces.

Brush tuna with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill 2 minutes on one side until there are dark grill marks; turn and grill other side about 2 minutes for medium rare – rare, depending on the thickness of the tuna. Cook another minute or two for medium-well. Remove and let rest 1-2 minutes. Cut into one-inch chunks.

To a large bowl, add tomatoes and bocconcini (small mozzarella balls), spinach, olives, and sliced eggplant, zucchini, and onions. Stir gently and drizzle with a bit of lemon juice; add tuna and stir again. Drizzle with remainder of lemon juice and then generously with vinaigrette. Divide between four pasta or shallow bowls, placing cherry tomatoes in one section, cheese in another, and so on. Garnish with olives and reserved basil julienne. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Cook's Note 1. If you've a large enough grill, grill the vegetables and add the tuna during the last few minutes. I made this on a big cast iron indoor grill that covers two burners (Lodge), but it still wasn't big enough for everything. 2. If you'd like a bit heartier salad, stir in a 15-ounce can of drained cannellini beans (season first pepper and with a bit of the vinaigrette) along with the grilled vegetables.

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spicy lemon-basil vinaigrette

- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- generous pinch crushed red pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon each kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons shallot or red onion, sliced
- 3 tablespoons basil julienne, divided
- 1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

In a medium bowl, whisk together lemon juice, spices, mustard, shallot, and two tablespoons basil. Slowly add the olive oil, whisking all the while, until vinaigrette is well mixed and emulsified. Taste and adjust seasonings. (Rest of basil is for garnish)

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