



## Salads Bulk up with Protein

Long relegated to the category of 'diet fare,' salads are taking center stage as substantial entrées showcasing myriad takes on the marriage of fresh produce and protein. With all of the exciting flavors available to spice up these high-margin menu items, they are fast becoming year-round favorites.

Not surprisingly, chicken is the big seller when it comes to salad proteins. In fact, at Holloway Commons at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, pre-grilled, julienned chicken is now offered on the salad bar every day. According to David Hill, area production manager, the operation began offering the chicken as an occasional special, but it was so popular that it's now a standard option that sells to the tune of four cases per day.

This dining hall serves standard salads with proteins, and chicken Caesar is the perennial favorite. "I'm seeing more people wanting protein in salads with a light dressing as they try to eat healthier," points out Hill. He's just about to roll out Buffalo chicken, a breaded finger or nugget tossed in a spicy sauce, which he'll serve atop greens. Spicy foods have a big appeal for UNH's students, he explains. Tofu is also gaining in popularity as a salad topper; Hill buys pre-marinated, pre-grilled tofu in Thai-peanut, Mexican jalapeno and tomato-basil flavors.

The Commons also serves four specialty salads to keep the menu fresh. Thai pork salad and Southwest salad (with London broil in spicy Southwest seasoning) are popular, as are modified versions of tuna, chicken, and ham salads "that have a more interesting appeal than the regular ones offered," Hill explains. For example, tuna is mixed with wasabi and peas, shredded carrots and red onion; curried chicken salad features chicken with curry powder, mayonnaise, apricot chutney and diced green and red peppers; and there's spicy egg salad, with cayenne pepper, scallions, Dijon mustard, relish and diced red peppers.

To spice up salad proteins, the dining service department at Rodale Press in Emmaus, Penn., uses rubs, marinades, chutneys and salsas. Some are spicy, such as jerk, Latin and chimichurri, says director Leah Nichols, and some are familiar favorites, such as barbecue. "People are looking for comfort first and foremost, but we have a lot of adventurous palates here," she explains.

To meet the needs of the former, she serves standard salads such as Chef's and Cobb, but estimates that about a third of her customers are looking for something a little out of the ordinary, such as seafood salad (lump crabmeat, shrimp and whitefish) or wasabi salmon salad.

Rodale also features a sizzling salads program at an action station where guests can customize their salads. They choose their protein (sesame grilled shrimp, grilled flank

steak, tofu), mix-ins and greens, or, for an Asian twist, there's a cold noodle salad version with ingredients such as jicama, papaya and Thai basil, with accompanying proteins.

Tofu's popularity as a salad ingredient is increasing at Rodale, Nichols says, and it's cooked in-house. "We oven roast it and get it really crispy-crunchy outside, which people love. Then, we toss it in ingredients such as peanut oil with soy sauce, toasted sesame seeds and red pepper flakes, or just garlic, salt and pepper."

Steven Golob, residence chef at Place Vanier hall at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, also uses marinades to add flavor to his salad proteins. For a Californian taste, he roasts chicken in oregano, olive oil, red wine vinegar, V8 juice, kosher salt, garlic puree, lemon pepper and lemon zest. An alternative marinade features lemon zest, lemon pepper, tarragon, kosher salt, orange juice and honey. Citrus flavors work well for a California feel, he points out.

Asian salads are also popular. Golob's marinade includes light soy sauce, sesame seed oil, a touch of white sugar, red chili, sambal olek (a hot chili paste), fresh garlic and ginger. Tofu works well with this marinade, and is mixed with noodles, green onions and rice wine vinegar and garnished with carrot and cucumber, or bamboo shoots and water chestnuts for texture, he says – as well as peanuts, if there are no allergies.

Golob offers salad proteins for vegans too, who often have difficulty finding sufficient sources of this nutrient. He serves a lot of chickpeas, white bean hummus and lentil hummus, for example. He's also preparing more salads featuring quinoa, a high-protein grain with a nutty flavor that's good with chickpeas or black beans and roasted corn with a cumin dressing.

### Protein Power

Want to market salads that pack a powerful protein punch? Here's how some popular sources stack up, according to the Harvard School of Public Health (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/protein.html>):

Roasted chicken (6 oz.): .....	42.5g protein
Tuna, packed in water (6 oz.):.....	40.1g protein
Beefsteak, broiled (6 oz.): .....	38.6g protein
Cottage cheese (1 cup):.....	28.1g protein
Tofu (1/2 cup):.....	10.1g protein
Lentils, cooked (1/2 cup): .....	9g protein
Kidney beans, cooked (1/2 cup):.....	7.6g protein
Cheddar cheese (1 oz):.....	7.1g protein
Egg (1 large): .....	6.3g protein