



ANSON MILLS

Spring Salad with Carolina Gold Rice Dressing and Benne Croutons

Yield

6 portions

Time

About 2 hours from start to finish

Cooking Remarks

When processing the rice for this dressing, do keep in mind that you're not going for an ultra-thick purée of rice, but rather to break the grains and release some of the starch and rice flavor nuances into the dressing.

This dressing could support a number of herb combinations: *fines herbes* come to mind immediately, as does a touch of green garlic. But we really like the interplay of basil, dill, and lemon zest that we suggest here—fresh and light. Make the silken rice dressing, but add the shallots, herbs, and lemon only a few minutes before you plan to serve the salad.

There is no salt in the recipe for the croutons because most sliced bread (which we recommend for its ease of use) is highly salted. Feel free to sprinkle some salt in with the benne seeds, if you wish.

Equipment Mise en Place

For the salad, you will need a salad spinner for washing the greens, an 8-inch square baking dish, and a serving platter.

For the dressing, you will need a small heavy-bottomed saucepan, a 2-cup and a 1-cup liquid measuring cup, an instant-read thermometer, a food processor, a fine-mesh sieve, a small whisk, and a rasp-style grater.

For the croutons, you will need a fine-mesh sieve, a small bowl, baking sheet, parchment paper, a butter warmer or small saucepan, a medium mixing bowl, a stand or hand mixer (or whisk), a rubber spatula.

Ingredients

for the salad

12 small beets (about 2 ounces each), washed and trimmed

Olive oil for coating the beets

Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 ripe avocados

½ lemon

2 heads red Boston or butter lettuce, cored, washed, and dried

1 bunch upland cress or watercress, washed and dried

for the dressing

2 cups water
1/4 cup Anson Mills Carolina Gold Rice
2 tablespoons juice from 1 juicy lemon
1/4 cup almond or avocado oil
1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon honey
1 tablespoon minced fresh basil
1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
1 tablespoon finely minced shallot
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

for the croutons

3 tablespoons unsalted European-style butter
1 tablespoon minced garlic
3.25 ounces white sandwich bread, crusts removed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (2 cups prepped cubes)
1 large egg white, room temperature
1 1/2 tablespoons Anson Mills Sea Island Benne Seeds

Directions

1. Roast the beets for the salad: Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees. Rub the beets with olive oil, sprinkle them with salt and pepper, and turn them into an 8-inch square baking dish. Roast until the beets are tender when poked with a wooden skewer, about 1 hour. Remove from the oven and let cool. When the beets are cool, peel them and set aside. (The beets can be roasted and peeled up to 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.)

2. Make the dressing: In a small heavy-bottomed saucepan, bring the water to a boil over high heat. Add the rice and stir once. The rice will simmer almost immediately. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pan—leaving just a hairline crack for steam to escape—and simmer gently, stirring occasionally, until the rice is completely tender and the grains are fat, about 30 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and pour the entire contents into a 2-cup liquid measuring cup; you should have 1 3/4 cups total volume. Let cool for about 20 minutes, to prevent the rice from gelatinizing when it is processed.

3. Set a fine-mesh sieve over a 1-cup liquid measuring cup. Pour the rice and water into a food processor and process for 20 seconds. Remove the bowl from the processor and pour the rice milk into the sieve. Rice granules in the milk will remain in the sieve. Press lightly with a spoon to extract liquid from the rice, but not so much that you create rice paste. You should have 1 cup of rice milk. Discard the solids. Whisk the lemon juice into the rice milk, followed by the almond oil. Whisk in the salt, pepper, and honey. Cover and refrigerate until you're ready to assemble the salad, or for up to 4 hours.

4. Prepare the croutons: Adjust the oven rack to the middle position (if it isn't already) and heat the oven to 375 degrees. Set a fine-mesh sieve over a small bowl. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a butter warmer or small saucepan, melt the butter over low heat. Add the garlic and cook it very gently, stirring frequently, until it virtually melts but does not take on any color, 2 to 3 minutes. Pour the butter and garlic into the fine-mesh sieve. Press on the garlic solids with a spoon to coax as much butter and flavor from the garlic as possible. Let the butter cool to lukewarm; save the garlic for another use, if you like.

5. Turn the bread cubes into a medium mixing bowl. Put the egg white into a stand-mixer bowl or a second medium bowl if you're using a hand-held mixer (or a whisk). With the whisk attachment, beat the egg white on medium speed until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes. (It will take longer with a whisk.) Reduce the speed to medium-low and drizzle in the butter while continuing to beat the whites. As soon as all of the butter is incorporated and the mixture is flowingly thick and creamy, pour the mixture over the bread cubes, scraping the bowl with a rubber spatula. Toss the benne seeds into the bowl and fold with the rubber spatula until the croutons are evenly coated and the seeds have adhered to the bread. Turn the croutons onto the baking sheet and distribute in an even layer. Bake until golden, stirring once or twice and gently breaking the croutons apart if they're sticking together, until golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside until you're ready to assemble the salad. (The croutons are best used the day they're made.)

6. Assemble the salad: Add the minced basil, dill, shallot, and lemon zest to the dressing and stir to combine. Halve the avocados, and then remove the pits and peel. Slice each half lengthwise into 6 pieces. Sprinkle the avocado slices with lemon juice from the lemon half. Cut the beets in half. (If your beets started out larger than 2 ounces each, cut them into slices.) Arrange the lettuce leaves on a serving platter. Arrange the avocado slices and the beets on the lettuce. Garnish with the cress and sprinkle the croutons over the salad. Spoon over as much dressing as you like. (Alternatively, you may tear the lettuce into pieces, turn it and the other salad ingredients into a large bowl, spoon dressing over, and toss.) Serve right away.