



# RAISING THE BAR

---

A Guide to Modernizing Salad Bars





## INTRODUCTION

Every food service venue would love to expand its reach by bringing new customers to the cafeteria. By incorporating consumer trends into practice, cafeterias can secure a place in the competitive lunch market.

Baum + Whiteman, a food and restaurant consulting firm, predicts that building meals centered around vegetables will remain a top trend in 2017.<sup>1</sup> They attribute this to innovations in vegetable preparations among chefs and the upswing of fast-casual salad chains that feature photogenic bowls of grains and seasonal greens.

Plant-based proteins are taking centerstage as they become increasingly mainstream. Chefs are at the forefront, bringing traditionally meat-based preparations to the plant world.

This toolkit will break down steps to leverage the power of these trends and fold them into institutional practice through the salad bar. The methods in this toolkit can be implemented in steps and modified as you learn which products your customers prefer, and which are most cost-effective. We review elements that meet the modern customer's expectations, and transform the flavors on your salad bar.

Join us on the pursuit of the perfect salad!



## I. UPGRADE YOUR INGREDIENTS

Change starts with the food you buy. Buy better and varied produce. Cook more in-house, from scratch. We eat first with our eyes. Your salad bar sells based on how it looks. Get creative. Make it beautiful.

### FRUIT

Fresh fruit brings sweetness, acidity and color to salads. Dried fruit can also be delicious salad bar toppings, but try to source products without added sugar.

- Grapefruit
- Oranges
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Raspberries
- Grapes
- Apples
- Nectarines
- Peaches
- Pears
- Mangoes
- Kiwi
- Watermelon
- Plums

### VEGETABLES

Sourcing quality fresh vegetables signals to your customers that your cafeteria is on the cutting edge. Feature seasonal produce to take your selection to another level.

- Edamame
- Artichokes
- Beets
- Jicama
- Baby Bok Choy
- Asparagus
- Yellow Squash
- Cucumber
- Celery
- Green Onions
- Cauliflower
- Zucchini
- Kohlrabi
- Baby Potatoes
- Pumpkin
- Fennel





## II. ELEVATE FLAVOR

Now that you have high quality produce- use freshly ground spices, fresh herbs, and spice mixes to transform them. Treat your vegetables like meat by applying a dry rub and roasting them. Or keep it fresh by turning raw ingredients into a readymade salad. Here are examples of simple dishes that take on new dimensions when dressed up.

### PREPARED VEGETABLE DISHES:

- Roasted Beets with Lemon Zest & Thyme
- Turmeric & Coriander Cauliflower
- Berbere Sweet Potatoes
- Red Curried Carrots
- Mint & Dill Cucumbers
- Acorn Squash with Garam Masala

## III. CUT ABOVE THE REST

Up the appeal of your salad bar by giving the ingredients fresh and creative knife cuts. Cuts should be delicate and bite-size to make food more appetizing and easier to eat.

### RADISH

Use a mandoline to shave the radish into thin coins.



### GREEN ONION

Rotate the onion to a 45° angle from usual position and cut onions on a bias.



### CELERY

Trim celery and cut rib into thirds. Shave the pieces with a mandoline.



### CARROT

Grate carrots or slice them into thin biased coins by tilting to a 45° angle before chopping.



### FENNEL

Halve fennel and core if desired. Run bulb over the mandoline.



## IV. ROTATE YOUR GRAINS

Ancient grains that were once underutilized are becoming household names. Grain-based bowls and salads have been widely embraced as healthy and delicious options. They add fiber to the salad bar, benefiting your customers' waistlines by filling them up faster.

Many grains carry distinct nutty flavors that add depth to salads. Try out new grains from the list below on your salad bar weekly. Dress grains with olive oil and a squeeze of fresh citrus before serving.

### ANCIENT GRAINS

- Millet
- Amaranth
- Black Rice
- Farro
- Barley
- Quinoa
- Kamut
- Wheat Berries
- Buckwheat
- Spelt
- Bulgar
- Freekeh
- Sorghum
- Rye Berries



## V. PUSH PLANT PROTEINS

Seeds, nuts, and legumes add a delicious bite to your salad bar. They bring texture and crunch into the mix while providing hearty plant-based protein. Create a custom seed mix to top salads. Bring out the natural earthy flavor of nuts by roasting them. Use spices and vinegars for heat and acid to brighten legumes.

### SEEDS

- Sunflower
- Pumpkin
- Sesame
- Chia
- Flax
- Poppy
- Hemp

### NUTS

- Almonds
- Walnuts
- Pistachios
- Cashews
- Pecans
- Hazelnuts
- Macadamia

### LEGUMES

- Kidney Beans
- Lima Beans
- Green Lentils
- Edamame
- Tofu
- Chickpeas
- Snap Peas

### Recipes

#### Grains

### QUINOA TABOULI

Mix cooked quinoa with cherry tomatoes, cucumber, chopped parsley, mint, and scallions. Add minced garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, and season to taste.

#### Seeds

### SEED MIXES

- Flax, sunflower, and pumpkin seeds
- Chia, sesame, and hemp seeds

#### Legumes

### SPICY ROASTED CHICKPEAS

Heat the oven to 400° and toss dry chickpeas with a light coat of olive oil, chili pepper, paprika, and cumin to taste in a bowl. Spread the chickpeas evenly on a baking sheet and cook for 30 minutes. Serve as a crispy salad topping.



## Recipes

### KALE MASSAGE

Bitter greens like kale and turnip greens benefit from a short massage using olive oil. This softens the greens and can make them more palatable to customers trying them for the first time.

### DIY SALAD MIX

Shred or grate kale, brussels sprouts and broccoli for an option with extra crunch.

### FURIKAKE BLEND

Use 4 sheets of unseasoned roasted nori. Cut into small strips with scissors. Add 1/2 cup of freshly ground toasted sesame seeds. Mix with 1/2 teaspoon each of sea salt and sugar.

## VI. MODERNIZE YOUR GREENS

It's time to innovate past iceberg lettuce. Your customers expect to see colorful, exciting salad blends. Sourcing dark and cruciferous greens will give your customers an extra dose of crunch. Try adding these to the salad bar, or get creative and make a lettuce mix of your own.

- Arugula
- Brussels Sprouts, shredded
- Red, Green Cabbage, shredded
- Curly Kale
- Lacinato Kale
- Carrots Tops
- Turnip Greens
- Mustard Greens
- Beet Greens
- Broccoli, shredded
- Swiss Chard
- Mesclun
- Spinach
- Collard Greens



## VII. SPICE IT UP!

Global spices can change the profile of your salad bar by making comforting flavors into accessible toppings. Develop your own house spice blend or fill up shakers with these old favorites.

**ZA'ATAR** [zah-tahr] is the Arabic name for an ancient herb blend that is still used in the Middle East, and typically includes dried herbs, sesame seeds, and salt.

**NORI** [nor-ee] is an edible seaweed commonly used as a garnish or sushi wrapper in Japanese cuisine.

**PIMENTON** [pim-en-tôn] is a foundational spice of Spanish cuisine, and is made from peppers that are dried and ground.

**SHICHIMI TOGARASHI** [shi-chim-ee tōg-ar-ashee] is Japanese for “7-flavor chile pepper” and often includes Sichuan pepper, shiso, garlic, hemp seed, poppy seed, sesame seed, ginger, citrus peel, and nori.

## VIII. DRESS IT FROM SCRATCH

Offer a homemade dressing option to get your customers dreaming about their daily salad. With just a handful of ingredients, take your salad dressings from processed to professional. Using vegetables in your dressings is the perfect way to bring color and a boost of fiber into the mix. Here are some ideas to bring bold new dressings to the table.

For each recipe combine the following ingredients in a blender, emulsify the vinaigrettes by adding the oil last, and season with salt and pepper to taste. The recipes listed below will be sufficient for your staff to taste and modify for your operations.

### TAHINI & MISO DRESSING

- 1/3 cup Tahini
- 1 tablespoon Miso Paste
- 2 Garlic Cloves
- 2 tablespoons Lemon Juice
- 1/3 cup Water as needed

### BEETS & BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

- 1 cup Roasted Beets
- 1 tablespoon Lemon Juice
- 2 tablespoons Balsamic Vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon Mustard
- 1/4 cup Olive Oil

### CARROT & GINGER VINAIGRETTE

- 1 cup Shredded Carrots
- 1" peeled Ginger, chopped
- 3 tablespoons Rice Vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Honey
- 2 teaspoons Miso Paste
- 1/4 cup Olive Oil

### CHIPOTLE BUTTERMILK RANCH









- 1/2 cup Greek Yogurt
- 1/2 cup Sour Cream
- 1/2 tablespoon Roasted Chipotles
- 1/2 cup low-fat Buttermilk
- 3 tablespoons Lime Juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Garlic Powder
- 1/2 teaspoon Onion Powder
- 1 teaspoon Dried Dill
- 1 teaspoon Dried Chives



# IX. COMPOSE YOUR SALADS

Now you have all the tools you need to create a delicious and visually striking salad bar. Dedicate a portion of your salad bar to promoting your new ingredients, and include instructions teaching your customers how to assemble them.

The Salad Builder is a template that will help you formulate new recipes to feature. Below are salad bar recipes created with the Salad Builder to get you started.

Salad Builder		
	Green	 Vegetable
	Grain/ Legume	 Fruit
	Vegetable	 Seed/ Nut
		 Dressing
		 Optional Spice

## SOUTHWEST CHOPPED SALAD

- Greens Mix #3
- Low-Sodium Black Beans
- Roasted Butternut Squash
- Cucumber
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Pumpkin Seeds
- Chipotle Buttermilk Ranch
- Pimenton

1

## SPINACH & CHICKPEA SALAD

- Greens Mix #2
- Chickpeas
- Curried Cauliflower
- Roasted Zucchini
- Dried Currants
- Sunflower Seeds
- Tahini Miso Dressing
- Za'atar

2

## RED CURRIED CARROTS & MANGO SALAD

- Greens Mix #1
- Black Rice
- Red Curried Roasted Carrots
- Edamame
- Mango
- Green Onion
- Carrot Ginger Vinaigrette
- Togarashi

3

## ROASTED BEETS & BERRY SALAD

- Greens Mix #2
- Green Lentils
- Roasted Beets
- Shaved Fennel
- Strawberries
- Toasted Walnuts
- Beets & Balsamic Vinaigrette
- Chia Seed Mix

4

NOTE: Per SCHDEC Regulation 61-25, Section 3-801.11(C), special requirement for highly susceptible population: Homemade salad dressings using non-pasteurized eggs and raw fish is not permitted.





## XII. CRAFT YOUR MENU

In a study by Cornell's Food Psychology Lab, products with descriptive labels sold 27% more and were seen by customers as both a *better value* and of *higher quality* than the same products without descriptive labels.<sup>2</sup>

origin	texture	method	sense
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homemade</li><li>• Local</li><li>• Seasonal</li><li>• From Scratch</li><li>• Hand-Crafted</li><li>• Traditional</li><li>• Name of Farm</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crispy</li><li>• Creamy</li><li>• Crunchy</li><li>• Tender</li><li>• Waxy</li><li>• Wilted</li><li>• Flaky</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marinated</li><li>• Roasted</li><li>• Grilled</li><li>• Pickled</li><li>• Shaved</li><li>• Braised</li><li>• Toasted</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crisp</li><li>• Juicy</li><li>• Spicy</li><li>• Rich</li><li>• Umami</li><li>• Bitter</li><li>• Tart</li></ul>

Help your customers visualize details about the ingredients including how they were sourced, their color, texture, and preparation. The menus below describe the same dishes, but which would you rather eat?

### Lunch Menu

Cauliflower salad with dried fruit and a mustard dressing

Grilled mushroom, chickpeas, artichoke and lemon dressing

### Lunch Menu

Shaved cauliflower, creamy mustard seed vinaigrette, pickled cucumber, edamame, golden raisins

Grilled Portobello, crispy chickpeas, marinated artichokes, roasted lemon vinaigrette and fresh herbs







## REFERENCES

1. Baum + Whiteman. 13 Hottest Food & Beverage Trends in Restaurant & Hotel Dining for 2017.
2. Wansink, Brian, James Painter, and Koert van Ittersum (2001), "Descriptive Menu Labels' Effect on Sales," *Cornell hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, December 42: 4, 68-72.

Page 3 photo credit (footer), page 4 photo credit (header): Bergman, Hal (Photographer). 2014. Page 7 graphic credit: made by Oliver and Freepik. Available at <http://www.flaticon.com/>. Accessed July 2, 2017.

Made possible with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Its contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC. This toolkit was developed in collaboration with the Culinary Institute of America.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Stephani Cook, MS  
Program Analyst  
Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
[scook@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:scook@ph.lacounty.gov)





  
**EAT YOUR BEST.  
LESS SALT.  
MORE PLANTS.**

 **COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Public Health**

  
**CIA<sup>®</sup>**  
consulting