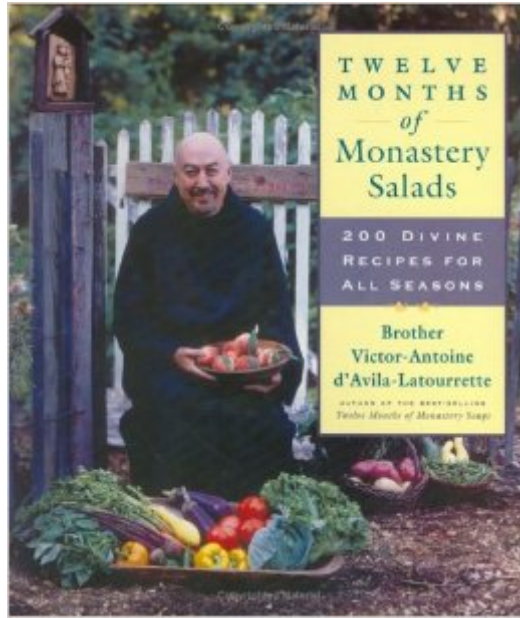


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Twelve Months Of Monastery Salads: 200 Divine Recipes For All Seasons



Synopsis

This engaging collection of more than 200 fresh, satisfying salads is arranged according to the bounty of the seasons, from the earliest spring harvest, through the overwhelming plenty of summer, through heartier fare in colder weather.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The collection of recipes in Twelve Months of Monastery Salads will inspire any die-hard carnivore to expand culinary horizons. From the straightforward Salade du Barry (cool weather veggies in a basic vinaigrette) to Heavenly Fruit Salad with Camambert, Brother Victor-Antione has compiled a stunning array of recipes (some rather ancient) and organized them to suit the home cook who is interested in healthy, seasonal eating. The text is particularly useful in that the recipes are arranged by month, so that each salad featured ingredients are in season (in the U.S., anyway), promoting more beautiful and healthy salads created with minimal fuss and expense. Sure, you might be able to buy an expensive red tomato in February, but why would you when Brother Victor-Antoine tempts with more seasonal offerings including fennel, endive and potatoes? Classics such as Salade Niciose are presented along side more unusual options like Cabbage, Apple and Pineapple Slaw, increasing the possibility that a reader will try something new on the way to making an old favorite. None of the recipes is complicated, further enhancing the book's usefulness for the home cook trying to eat well during a busy day. One of the greatest gifts given through this work, though, is the realization that practically any seasonal ingredient may be turned into a lovely salad. Gone forever is the assumption that a salad must be watery light green leaves covered with limp vegetables, stale bread, and viscous dressing. Instead, readers will note the variety of simple dressings that are only

a whisk away and the inclusion of some rather non-standard ingredients (such as caviar, hazelnut oil and clementines) used to create delicious, simple meals. Also worth noting is the collection of quotations (religious and secular) and proverbs used to punctuate the text. Humbling, inspiring, educational and even amusing - or all of these at once (a French proverb warns that "Beware of the devil, he can hide in a sprig of parsley") - these inclusions help illustrate Brother Victor-Antoine's commitment to God, his order and simple food. What a great gift that we share his commitment with all of us.

Organized by season, Brother Victor's latest (after "Twelve Months of Monastery Soups") begins with a primer on ingredients and preparation. A list of salads-by-category follows: classic international (Indian Curried Lentil), rustic (Mushroom and Arugula), exotic (Madagascar Date-Nut), creative (Herbed Tofu), pasta (Mint Flavored Fusilli), fish (Salmon and Avocado), Italian (Artichoke Heart), French (Salade au Roquefort), fruit (Persimmon and Greens), and Saints' (St. Cecile Cauliflower Salad). A charming book, sprinkled with aphorisms from the likes of M.F.K. Fisher and Helen Nearing, it adheres to vegetarian, monastic principles (which do not exclude seafood or dairy), and indulges in a few exceptions, like a delicious caviar dressing. Fresh ingredients are emphasized, of course, but Brother Victor is not above using canned fava beans and jarred artichoke hearts in his Etruscan Salad or a jar of taramasalata (Greek dip made with carp roe) in a scrumptious egg salad. He offers serving suggestions, including temperature, presentation and course, and ends with a chapter on flavored vinegars, oils and dressings. Attractive and eclectic.

This is the tenth cookbook by Benedictine Monk Brother Victor-Antoine D'Avila-Latourrette and the fifth that is organized to reflect recipes by season or by other milestones in the course of the year. The recipes also tend to reflect the diet of a Benedictine monastery in upstate New York, which means there is very little protein in the dishes aside from legumes, cheese, eggs, and canned fish. The simple monastic calling does not keep Brother Victor from being a bit trendy in his choice of recipes and greens. In his catalogue of nineteen salad greens, he includes Mesclun, Belgian endive, mache, radicchio, and watercress. And, although he includes iceberg lettuce, he doesn't really like it and confesses that when they have it, the brothers feed it to their chickens. The list of greens is followed by a 'Useful tips for Salad Preparation', which are, indeed, useful, albeit, short. A much more interesting section on 'Types of Salads' follows, which lists the eleven types of salad recipes listed in this book. After reading the recipes, one really wishes the author had built his chapters on these eleven types rather than the truly artificial use of months of the year. The salad

types are classic international salads; rustic salads; exotic salads; creative salads; mixed salads; pasta salads; egg, cheese and fish salads; Italian salads; French regional salads; Saint's salads; and fruit salads. It is obvious that these categories are artificial and overlap in the extreme, but they are still more useful for finding a salad to fit a particular occasion than the artificial organization by month. The organization of recipes by month is not entirely arbitrary, as fall and winter salads do contain a higher proportion of apples, pears, potatoes, and citrus than do summer salads. And, my 'Field Guide to Produce' does say that greens such as arugula, chicory, and endive are available the year around. But, I wonder when I see tomatoes or new potatoes in recipes for February. If I were rating the book exclusively on the accuracy of its seasonality, I might give it only a B-. Luckily, there is much more of value to the book. As you can see from the types of salads, the book contains many classic salad recipe names such as Caesar salad, Waldorf salad, and Salade Nantaise. While the names are classic, I believe many of the recipes take some liberties with the classic ingredients. Brother Victor's Caesar salad, for example, is based on Boston lettuce rather than being done entirely with the much more commonly specified Romaine lettuce, as recommended by such diverse sources as James Beard, Martha Stewart, and 'Better Homes and Gardens'. All three sources also include anchovies, which Brother Victor leaves out. Brother Victor also leaves out Worcestershire sauce and egg yolk, specified by two out of my three authorities. In its place, Brother Victor adds Tabasco sauce. Brother Victor also adds blue cheese, which none of my sources specify. None of this is to suggest that this recipe is not perfectly delicious. It is only to indicate that one should not expect recipes with classic names to be described with the classic ingredients or method of preparation. In fact, I found practically every recipe to be inviting, easy to make, and relatively inexpensive. I especially liked the generous selection of potato salads. From the index, I count nineteen (19), almost all with very traditional sounding names or sources. I do find it odd, though, that in all of these recipes, the author suggests peeling the potatoes before boiling. Virtually every potato salad recipe I have ever seen, including those from James Beard AND Julia Child recommend cooking before peeling. I am convinced this is not simply everyone copying everyone else. Rather, I believe peeling after cooking will prevent the potatoes from becoming overly mushy and waterlogged. I have even made potato salad with Russets cooked before peeling, and they peeled, sliced, and mixed with the dressing without mushing up on me. The book ends with a chapter on standard dressings such as mayonnaise, aioli, blue cheese dressing, and vinaigrettes. The author succeeds in springing a new mayonnaise technique on me. I have seen recipes done with a whisk, a food processor, and a blender. This is the first use I have seen of a hand mixer, although on reflection, it seems as much or more logical than the food processor or blender. There is

not much to the book aside from the recipes, but the added inspirational quotes scattered here and there in attractive iconed boxes lends a very pleasant air to reading this book. It may not seem like much unless you have just finished reading a book with a truly slobbish book design. By far the greatest strength of the book is the variety of greens, cheeses, fruits, beans, vegetables, vinegars, and nuts used in constructing these recipes, without relying on anything which will break the bank. If you need recipes with chicken or fresh seafood, check out a good book of Provencal recipes. Highly recommended for simplicity, variety, and saintly demeanor.

I love salads but get a little bored with them. This is an amazing cook book because the salad recipes are unique and delicious. This book reflects the love of gardening of Brother Victor-Antoine. Recipes are divided into seasons so that you can cull from your own garden or easily find the ingredients you'll need at the right time of the year. You'll love Brother Victor and his ingenious recipes. It's great getting cooking advice from a monk!

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