

Escarole Salad With Smoky Halloumi Croutons

By Melissa Clark

YIELD 4 servings

TIME 20 minutes

If you believe the only thing better than cheese is fried cheese, then you may just love halloumi. Because of its high melting point, halloumi browns before it melts, making it perfect for frying, grilling or any kind of searing. Here, it's pan-fried with smoked paprika, then added to an escarole salad with a garlicky, lemony dressing. Slivered red onion adds pungency, while fresh parsley leaves brighten everything. If you can get the pomegranate seeds, do use them; they add a juicy sweetness that's perfect with the richness of the cheese. Serve it by itself as a first or salad course, or with roasted vegetables, fish or chicken to round it out.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DRESSING:

1 small garlic clove, grated or pressed
1 ½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice, plus more to taste
½ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more to taste
5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to taste

FOR THE SALAD:

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed
6 ounces halloumi cheese, diced into 1-inch cubes and patted dry
¾ teaspoon sweet smoked paprika (pimentón)
6 cups escarole, torn into bite-size pieces
1 cup parsley leaves and tender stems
½ shallot, or 1/4 small red onion, thinly sliced
Pomegranate seeds, for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

Step 1

Make the dressing: In a small bowl, whisk together garlic, lemon juice and salt. Let sit for 30 seconds for the salt to dissolve, then whisk in olive oil. Taste and add more salt if needed. Set aside.

Step 2

Prepare the salad: Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a medium skillet over medium-high until it thins out, about 20 seconds. Add cheese and cook until golden on one side, 1 to 2 minutes, adding more oil if the pan dries out. Flip cheese and sprinkle with paprika. Let cook without moving until golden on the other side, about 1 minute longer. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.

Step 3

Put escarole, parsley and shallot in a large salad bowl. Add the dressing and warm halloumi, and toss well, adding more oil, lemon juice and salt, to taste. Serve immediately, strewn with pomegranate seeds, if you like.

PRIVATE NOTES

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