

Salade Niçoise

This is my take on one of the World's truly great salads. Apart from the quality of the ingredients, which is always crucial, one of the keys to this recipe is the presentation, in my view. The lettuce needs to be soft enough to lie relatively flat on the plates so the old round lettuce is favourite, even if unexciting.

This dish is occasionally topped with plain grilled tuna to make a more substantial meal though, in my view, it seems substantial enough as it is. (This was not always the case!)

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	30 mins
cooking time:	20 mins

Ingredients

250g fine/French beans,
trimmed & halved
250g salad potatoes,
quartered lengthwise
1 tsp whole grain mustard
2 tsp white wine vinegar
2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
1 head round lettuce, leaves
separated
6 plum tomatoes, each cut
into 6 segments
1 tin anchovy fillets, drained
& halved lengthwise
24 black olives, pitted and
halved
2 tbs capers, drained
6 large eggs, hard-boiled,
shelled & quartered
salt
4 small tuna steaks
(optional!)

Method

Boil the potatoes in salted water until just tender then refresh and drain. I like to steam the green beans above the potatoes while they are cooking but, if you can't do this, boil them separately so that they retain some bite. Refresh and drain the beans. Dry the potatoes and beans (salad spinner or clean tea towel) and combine them in a bowl.

Make the dressing by whisking together the olive oil, wine vinegar and mustard. Add this to the potatoes and beans and mix well to allow the flavours to be absorbed.

Now, to the presentation. Line each plate with a layer of lettuce leaves. Pile some of the potatoes and bean mixture in the centre of each plate. Surround each with a ring of 6 segments of tomato alternating with 6 segments of egg, as evenly spaced as possible. Drape each egg segment with a sliver of halved anchovy fillet and sprinkle a little salt on each tomato segment. Between each tomato and egg segment, put a black olive half then scatter the capers evenly around each plate. You might also drizzle a little additional olive oil around the tomato and egg rings.

(If you are desperately hungry, sear 4 small tuna steaks on a very hot ridged grill pan being sure to keep them pink in the centre. Set these atop the piles of potato and bean salad.)