

KALE & BLUE CHEESE SALAD

with red wine poached pears & candied curried walnuts

Servings: 4 -5

INGREDIENTS

180g Fresh Kale

For the Pears

1/2 bottle good quality dry red wine

3 firm but ripe Pears, stems left on, peeled

For the blue cheese mayonnaise

1 free-range whole egg

1 free-range egg yolk

1 tsp Dijon mustard

100ml olive oil

400ml canola oil

1-2 Tbs white wine vinegar

½ lemon

Sea salt

200g blue cheese

For the candied curried nuts

100g raw walnuts

2 tsp curry powder

1/2 cup white granulated sugar

1/2 cup water

Flaked sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Wash the kale in cold water and dry, preferably in a salad spinner - as this removes all the excess water. Put aside somewhere cool, covered with a tea cloth.

For the Pears

Peel your pears, leaving the stalk on and place them in a medium pot. Pour in enough red wine to nearly cover the pears. Place the lid on the pot and bring to the boil. Once boiling, remove the pot from the heat, leaving the lid on and allow to cool. I find this the most foolproof way to poach fruit, as it is so easy to overcook poached fruit. By using this method, you are using the residual heat to continue cooking the fruit. The pears should still be slightly crispy, not much worse than mushy poached fruit.

Preheat your oven to 180 degrees Celsius.

For the blue cheese mayonnaise

Whisk the egg yolk and whole egg in a bowl, then add the mustard and whisk together. If you are lucky enough to have a hand blender in your kitchen, this is when I retire the whisk and switch to my faithful friend, the hand blender. It makes the whole process of making mayonnaise at home, much more pleasant and you won't get an arm cramp! (if not, a whisk will do the perfect job, just with a bit more elbow grease) Gradually add about half the oils, very slowly at first, blending continuously for around 3 to 5 minutes, or until thickened. Once you've added about half the oils, whisk in 1 tablespoon of vinegar – this will loosen the mixture slightly and give it a paler colour. Continue to gradually add the remaining oil, whisking continuously. Season with a pinch of salt, a squeeze of lemon juice and a little more vinegar, if needed. Taste! Then add the blue cheese by crumbling it into the mayo, I blended the cheese into the mayo to give it a stronger flavour throughout and left in some small chunks. Set aside. You may not need all the mayo for this salad, which is not a bad thing, just store in a sterilized jar in the fridge for up to one week and add to any other salads or sandwiches.

For the candied curried nuts

Place the raw nuts onto a baking sheet at 180 degrees Celsius, to toast. This brings out the nut oils and improves the intensity of the flavour. Toast for about 10 minutes until they begin to brown. Remove from the oven and place nuts in a heatproof bowl.

In a heavy based saucepan add the water and sugar; melt on a medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Add 1 tsp curry powder and stir until combined. Pour the sugar mixture of the raw nuts and mix. Once combined add the remaining 1 tsp curry powder to dust the candied nuts. Return the nuts to the oven on a baking tray (always best to place

them on a silicon mat or greaseproof paper to avoid sticking) to dry for 10 minutes, this allows the sugar to harden well and make them crunchy. Put to one side to cool.

At this point the pears should be perfectly "al dente". Remove the pears from the red wine and continue to allow to cool. With the remaining red wine, you can reduce this and use it in a salad dressing or keep it in the fridge to add to stews or even make a red wine ice cream if you're feeling adventurous!

Crumble the remaining 100g of blue cheese. Gather your ingredients for assembling the salad.

Slice the pears evenly into thick slices. Toss the blue cheese mayo through the kale and massage it into the leaves. The mayo should coat the kale heavily.

Then begin to layer your salad. Always layer any salad! Nothing worse than a salad with all the "nice" bits scattered over the top of the leaves and when you dig into the salad, get left with nothing as everyone has taken the bulk of the salad on the top.

Start with the dressed kale and continue with the sliced pears, crumbled blue cheese and nuts. Season each layer with salt and pepper. Once you've completed building your salad you are ready to serve. Make sure to keep it out of reach from hungry hands, as it will be super tempting to pick at the yummy walnuts or pear slices!