

Hearty Greek Salad

YIELD Serves 4 as a main dish or 6 to 8 as a side dish

TIME 25 minutes, plus 30 minutes salting

Why This Recipe Works

Imagine bites of sweet tomatoes, briny olives, savory onion, crunchy cucumber, and tangy feta—without any lettuce filler—and you've got horiatiki salata, the real Greek salad. As with any ingredient-driven dish, sourcing high-quality components and bringing out their best was a must. Ripe, sweet tomatoes are loaded with juice that can flood the salad, so we tossed halved wedges (which allowed for chunky but manageable bites) with salt and set them in a colander to drain for 30 minutes. Soaking the onion slices in ice water lessened their hot bite by washing away thiosulfates while maintaining their fresh, crisp texture. A creamy Greek feta, which must be made with at least 70 percent fatty sheep's milk, brought richness to the lean vegetables. When we tried subbing in fresh oregano for the traditional dried, we understood why the dried herb is preferred: Its more delicate flavor complemented—but didn't upstage—the vegetables. Vinaigrette is never used to dress horiatiki salata, but we did tweak the custom of drizzling the salad separately with oil and vinegar by tossing the vegetables with each component, ensuring that the mixture was lightly but evenly dressed.

Gather Your Ingredients

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds tomatoes, cored
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons table salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ red onion, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, plus extra for seasoning
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper
- 1 English cucumber, quartered lengthwise and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch chunks
- 1 green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 2 by $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch strips
- 1 cup pitted kalamata olives
- 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 (8-ounce) block feta cheese, sliced into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick triangles

Before You Begin

Soaking the sliced onion in ice water tempers its heat and bite. Use only large, round tomatoes here, not Roma or cherry varieties, and use the ripest in-season tomatoes you can find. A fresh, fruity, peppery olive oil works well here if you have it. We prefer to use feta by Real Greek Feta or Dodoni in this recipe. The salad can be served with crusty bread as a light meal for four.

Instructions

1. Cut tomatoes into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick wedges. Cut wedges in half crosswise. Toss tomatoes and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt together in colander set in large bowl. Let drain for 30 minutes. Place onion in small bowl, cover with ice water, and let sit for 15 minutes. Whisk vinegar, oregano, pepper, and remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt together in second small bowl.
2. Discard tomato juice and transfer tomatoes to now-empty bowl. Drain onion and add to bowl with tomatoes. Add vinegar mixture, cucumber, bell pepper, olives, and capers and toss to combine. Drizzle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil and toss gently to coat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to serving platter and top with feta. Season each slice of feta with extra oregano to taste. Drizzle feta with remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Serve.