

Mediterranean Rice Salad

Serves 8

Salad:

1/2 cup pine nuts

3 cups cooked long grain rice

1 cup crumbled feta cheese (even the flavored types!)

1 cup English cucumber, peel left on, sliced

1/2 cup red bell pepper, diced

1 zucchini squash, grilled tender-crisp, and cut into chunks

1 yellow squash, grilled tender-crisp, and cut into chunks

3 green onions, sliced thin, including tops

1 cup kalamata olives, pitted

1 cup grape tomatoes, halved

Dressing:

1 or 2 cloves garlic, minced

2 T. fresh rosemary, finely minced

1 T. fresh mint, finely minced

6 T. extra-virgin Texas olive oil

Zest of 1 large lemon

3-4 T. lemon juice

Salt and pepper to taste



To prepare the salad: Toast the pine nuts in a dry, nonstick skillet over medium heat. Stir often. Watch carefully – they burn easily! When lightly browned, transfer the nuts into a small bowl and set aside to cool. In a large bowl combine the cooked rice and feta. Add cucumber, bell pepper, grilled squashes, onions, olives and tomatoes. Stir gently to mix all the ingredients.

To prepare the dressing: In a small bowl combine garlic, rosemary, mint, lemon zest and lemon juice. Very slowly drizzle in the olive oil while whisking continuously until the mixture is emulsified. Adjust seasonings. Pour over rice mixture, and lightly toss all ingredients together. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Make-ahead tip: This salad is delicious made a day in advance to allow flavors to blend.

Chef's variation: Add cooked, diced chicken or cooked shrimp for a heartier salad.

Recipe created by Molly Fowler, The Dining Diva.