

## Crème de la Crop

### Cucumber, Summer Squash and Fresh Herb Orzo Salad

1 Cucumber, diced into ½ inch squares  
2 zucchini, diced into ½ inch squares (preferably of varying color)  
2 tbsp olive oil (plus 1/3 cup more for vinaigrette below)  
¼ cup Fresh Chopped Herbs (Basil, Dill, Cilantro &/or oregano)  
1 lb orzo pasta  
2 tbsp salt plus 1 tsp for sautéing the zucchini  
2 cups Fresh Salad Greens, Arugula or Sorrel  
1 tbsp pine nuts or sunflower kernels

**Optional:** Diced Summer tomatoes, 1 tbsp Capers, 1 tbsp pitted Olives, Crumbled Goat or Feta Cheese

#### Vinaigrette:

¼ cup Sherry or Red Wine Vinegar  
2 tbsp fresh lemon or orange juice, also zests for added flavor  
1/3 cup Olive Oil  
salt and ground pepper to taste

Heat olive oil on medium-high heat. Toast orzo lightly until golden. Remove from heat. While cooling, sauté diced zucchini and squash on high heat. You want the zucchini and squash to remain firm, just color on the outside. Boil 2 gallons of water, add 2 tbsp salt then cook toasted orzo until al dente. Strain and cool under running cold water. If you want to omit cooking the zucchini and squash, I would cut them lengthwise in half, and then slice thin half moons.

To assemble, toss the vegetables with the vinaigrette, then top the fresh salad greens. Garnish with cheese, pine nuts or sunflower kernels.

### *Bean and Couscous Salad ( can be served chilled or room temperature)*

*2 cups boiling water or vegetable stock  
2 cups couscous or Bulgur  
1 pound mixed beans, cooked until al dente in boiling, salted water (about 4 minutes)  
juice & zests of two lemons (or oranges)  
¼ cup Olive oil  
1 cup red and yellow cherry tomatoes, if available  
½ cup slivered toasted or smoked almonds  
¼ cup fresh chopped mint (can substitute basil or cilantro)  
salt and pepper to taste (preferably freshly ground)*

*Pour boiling water or stock over couscous or bulgur, cover with plastic wrap and let sit for 15-20 minutes. Remove wrap and fluff with a fork to cool. Blanch and cool green beans in ice water, cut in half or thirds, if necessary. Stir olive oil and lemon juice in large bowl. Add beans, tomatoes, almonds and mint, then couscous or bulgur in amount desired. Season to taste.*

### Simon's Wine Pairings

Both of these recipes are simple preparations that let the ingredients themselves shine. Choosing wines for dishes like this are simple...I look for clean elegant unadulterated wines with subtle or no oak ageing and bright crisp finishes.

For a white wine, I recommend the Marimar Acero Chardonnay. Grown in organic and sustainable vineyards in Sonoma, the Chardonnay has ripe golden delicious apple and lemon oil nuances. The wine is unoaked but the wine maker allowed the wine to age "sur lie". This means the wine was aged on the dead yeast cells that it was fermented with, with occasional stirring the wine picks up gorgeous toasted bread, biscuit and nutty aromas. You will not miss the oak on this wine, indeed if you are used to the superfruity, almost sweet style of unoaked Chardonnay, you might think the wine was oaked. From Sonoma, certified organically farmed by the CCOF. Find it for around \$30 at independent wine shops. [HTTP://WWW.MARIMARESTATE.COM/PAGE/INDEX2.PHP](http://www.marimarestate.com/page/index2.php)

For a nice red option, I would pick the Snoqualmie Naked Cabernet. Certified Organic by the Washington State Department of Agriculture this is a very Old World style of Cab. By that I mean its earthy and balanced with lower alcohol than New World wines. Lightly oaked this wine shines with elegant foods. Light tannins and a crisp Bordeaux like finish will help with any garlic, olive oil, nuts or cheese you throw at it. Around \$15. You'll notice I often recommend wines from this winery. I am seriously impressed with ALL of their wines in the NAKED series. Balanced, structured, organic and value driven...these wines tickle me in all the right places.

[http://www.snoqualmie.com/Wines/naked\\_wines/2007\\_cabernet\\_sauvignon](http://www.snoqualmie.com/Wines/naked_wines/2007_cabernet_sauvignon)

