



The Valley's Best Salads

by Rachel Williford • Forward by Candy Leshner • Photography by Michael Falconer

Adam and Eve dined *au naturale* on the original “garden” cuisine, while ancient Greeks and Romans appreciated a whole range of raw veggies offered in their beloved oil, vinegar and sea salt. Hippocrates advocated eating fresh vegetables and “grasses” at the beginning of a meal; this way they wouldn’t form “obstructions” for the rest of the feast. Somehow though, salads took an inauspicious turn for the worse. During the 1600s, most people in Western Europe believed that fresh greens consumed in an uncooked state would actually rot inside you, just like compost. (I have a few devoted carnivore friends who are definite throwbacks to this era.)

Fortunately for us, in 1699 John Evelyn wrote the consummate book on vegetables called *Acetaria: A Discourse of Sallets* (the word “acetaria” is actually an old-world term for items you’d find in a salad). A man way ahead of his time, Evelyn celebrates gardening, gathering and preparing the fruits of those labors in the form of salads in his groundbreaking book; he even disdained eating meat back in an era where meat and grains were about the only things that passed through a

“civilized” man’s lips. Still, this powerful treatise began a new relationship between the people of Western Europe and fresh produce. Not long after this, composed salads filled with a complexity of ingredients became the darling of society. Today, those salads would be referred to as “chef’s salads.”

So when do you eat a salad? If it’s to be one of many courses, most of us are programmed to expect it at the beginning of the meal. In Europe, the salad often comes at the end of a meal. Why the discrepancy? Since most salads are dressed with some sort of vinegar, Europeans prefer to savor it at the end of their meal, so as not to affect the flavor of the wines planned for the evening – how clever is that?

Today, though, we eat salad any time it strikes our fancy, and summertime in Arizona is about as striking a time as it gets. Whether you prefer a consummate, picked-30-minutes-ago-from-the-organic-garden type of salad or a hearty entrée salad, we’ve combed the Valley for the very finest examples of this ancient offering – which might well be considered man’s very first meal.



Golden Plate Awards

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Quiessence Restaurant & Wine Bar

at The Farm at South Mountain, 6106 S. 32nd Street, Phoenix
602.276.6360, www.thefarmsouthmountain.com



OWNER:

Pat Christofolo

EXECUTIVE CHEF:

Greg LaPrad

CUISINE:

Farm-fresh, locally grown fare

AMBIENCE:

Take a moment to inhale the fragrant air as you walk beneath the flower-laden archway into a garden fit for a fairytale. Maya's at The Farm is just steps away, adding herbs and fresh vegetables to the colorful "other world" at Quiessence. Floor-to-ceiling windows and outside dining allow for a picture-perfect garden view.

SENSATIONAL SALADS:

"It's like eating a garden!" Candy Leshner, *f&l's* editor-in-chief, exclaimed after one forkful of LaPrad's crisp creations. I must admit to later craving the aromatic GARDEN GREENS (pictured) with spring root veggies and fresh herbs picked from Maya's farm, dressed lightly in a local lemon vinaigrette. Also heavenly (and sinless!) were BATAVIAN ROMAINE with white anchovy, dry jack emulsion, locally farmed eggs and capers; and heirloom FARM TOMATOES with arugula, Black Mesa feta cheese, homemade herbed croutons and a tantalizing olive vinaigrette.

BEYOND GREENS:

For the first time since its inception, Quiessence will be open year round. Upon your visit, enjoy LaPrad's ever-changing menu which relies heavily on what Maya and other local farmers are harvesting that week. SCHNEPF FARMS PEACH SHORTCAKE WITH CHANTILLY CREAM won our hearts, as well as the hand-cut pastas made fresh daily.