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DONNA ERICKSON'S BEST BITES
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PHOTO CREDIT: Donna Erickson



Make a Family-Style Salade Nicoise

It's market time! On weekend mornings, I like to saunter through our neighborhood farmers market amid the crowds of people who, like me, are attracted to the "picked at their peak" vegetables, flowers, eggs, honey and jams in colorful stalls. Adults and kids alike visit with vendors, while friends happily bump into one another for a chat.

Since produce is overflowing at markets and grocery stores, there's no better time to make a fresh, easy-to-prepare dish that the whole family will love. I was recently inspired by my friend, Ann Francois, to make a big salade nicoise for the centerpiece of her dining table at a recent gathering with our friends.

While I have vivid memories of traveling in southern France and feasting on this country salad (which is typically composed of tomatoes, tuna, hard-boiled-egg halves, and anchovies on a bed of lettuce, dressed with a vinaigrette), Ann's version featured the addition of locally sourced new potatoes and mounds of green beans. Each ingredient was artfully arranged on a platter and served with crusty French bread.

Make this healthy salad with your kids for a light and simple-to-prepare main course. What makes it so family-friendly is that you can tweak it to suit tastes. Add artichoke hearts, capers, or grilled red peppers. Don't like anchovies? Just skip them!

SALADE NICOISE

Serves 6

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 head Boston lettuce, separated into leaves, washed and dried
- 1 pound firm green beans, preferably French string beans (haricot verts), cooked just beyond the tender-crisp stage and chilled
- 1 pound new potatoes, cooked and halved
- 2-3 (5- or 6-ounce) cans albacore solid white tuna, drained and flaked, or grilled fresh tuna, cut into chunks
- 3 large vine-ripe tomatoes, sliced into wedges
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, halved lengthwise
- 1 cup pitted black olives
- 1 (2-ounce) can anchovy fillets, rinsed and patted dry (optional)



To make the vinaigrette, in a jar, let kids measure and shake vigorously to combine the oil, vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, garlic, salt and pepper. Set aside.

To assemble the salad, working together with your kids, arrange the lettuce over a large serving platter. Top with mounds of the green beans, potatoes, tuna, tomatoes, eggs and olives. Drape the anchovy fillets (if using) over the potatoes.

Drizzle vinaigrette over the salad and serve.

Donna Erickson creates relationships and community through food and fun. Find more to nourish and delight you at www.donnaerickson.com.

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