Going Healthy: 6 Light and Easy Ways to Dress Your Salad

Description

Are you planning on having a big feast prepared for your July 4th celebration? For most, Iâ€™m sure that involves a grill and all different kinds of meat; right? This dad loves organic, grass-fed meat (preferably local) as much as any omnivorous individual, but I â€œrarelyâ€• have it since it is costly. Ha, get it, â€œrarelyâ€•? *sigh*

Well, while the main dish is always important, donâ€™t forget about the very healthy side options that make your celebration, or any meal, complete; fruits and veggies! An easy way to get a substantial dose of these vitamin and mineral rich plants is to create a salad.

Iâ€™m saladâ€™s number one fan and have a giant one filled with all sorts of goodies every night, but I never use salad dressing from a bottle. Nope, most bottled salad dressings will turn that once healthy bowl of fresh produce into something not so good for you rather quickly.

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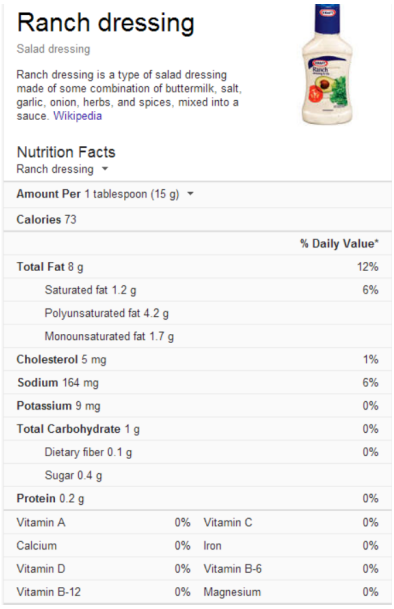
Just one tablespoon of popular dressings like ranch, Caesar, and thousand island range from 65 to 75 calories. If you ever tried measuring your dressing, Iâ€™m sure youâ€™ll find most people put way more than one tablespoon!



Ranch dressing

Salad dressing

Ranch dressing is a type of salad dressing made of some combination of buttermilk, salt, garlic, onion, herbs, and spices, mixed into a sauce. Wikipedia

Nutrition Facts

Ranch dressing

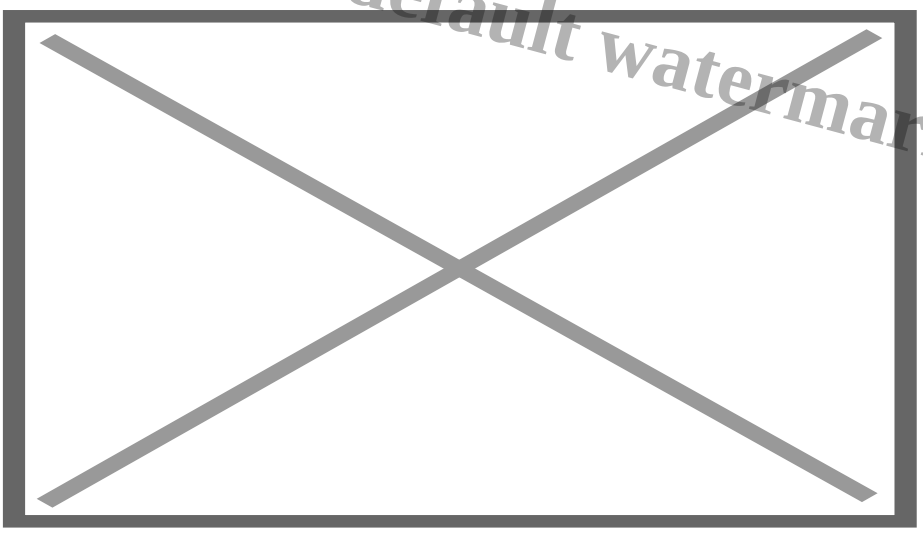
Amount Per 1 tablespoon (15 g)	
Calories 73	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8 g	12%
Saturated fat 1.2 g	6%
Polyunsaturated fat 4.2 g	
Monounsaturated fat 1.7 g	
Cholesterol 5 mg	1%
Sodium 164 mg	6%
Potassium 9 mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 1 g	0%
Dietary fiber 0.1 g	0%
Sugar 0.4 g	
Protein 0.2 g	0%

Vitamin A	0%	Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	0%	Iron	0%
Vitamin D	0%	Vitamin B-6	0%
Vitamin B-12	0%	Magnesium	0%

Not to mention you are receiving very little, if any nutritional value from these. Also, beware of the â€œlightâ€• or â€œfat-freeâ€• varieties, these are typically loaded with sugar and extra chemicals to maintain a certain thickness. No thanks!

I enjoy finding new and creative ways to â€œdressâ€• my salad without the use of those creamy and/or chemical-laden choices and using things that actually boost the nutritional value. Here are six options I suggest trying next time youâ€™re having a salad.

1. Salsa â€“ If you need to cut down on calories or just looking for something different, salsa is your answer. There are many varieties to choose from at the store, just look for real ingredients and nothing more. Iâ€™ve seen modified food starch, guar gum, and even corn syrup in some, so be cautious! From mild, medium, or hot, have your choice and mix into your salad as desired. Add some canned black beans, corn, and tomatoes for a Mexican fiesta salad.



2. Nuts and Seeds â€“ Add crunch with a healthy dose of protein and good fats from seeds like sunflower and pumpkin seeds, and nuts like pistachios, walnuts, and almonds. Itâ€™s easy to go overboard though, so try and keep it to a moderate amount.

3. Dijon Mustard and Yogurt â€“ Stir a big spoonful of Dijon or your favorite mustard (I enjoy horseradish mustard) into 1/4 to 1/2 cup of non-fat plain regular or Greek yogurt for a healthy dressing made in minutes. Increase taste and nutritional value by adding your favorite herbs and spices; my favorite combo is cumin, cayenne, garlic powder, and dill. Have fun, be creative, and see what you can make.

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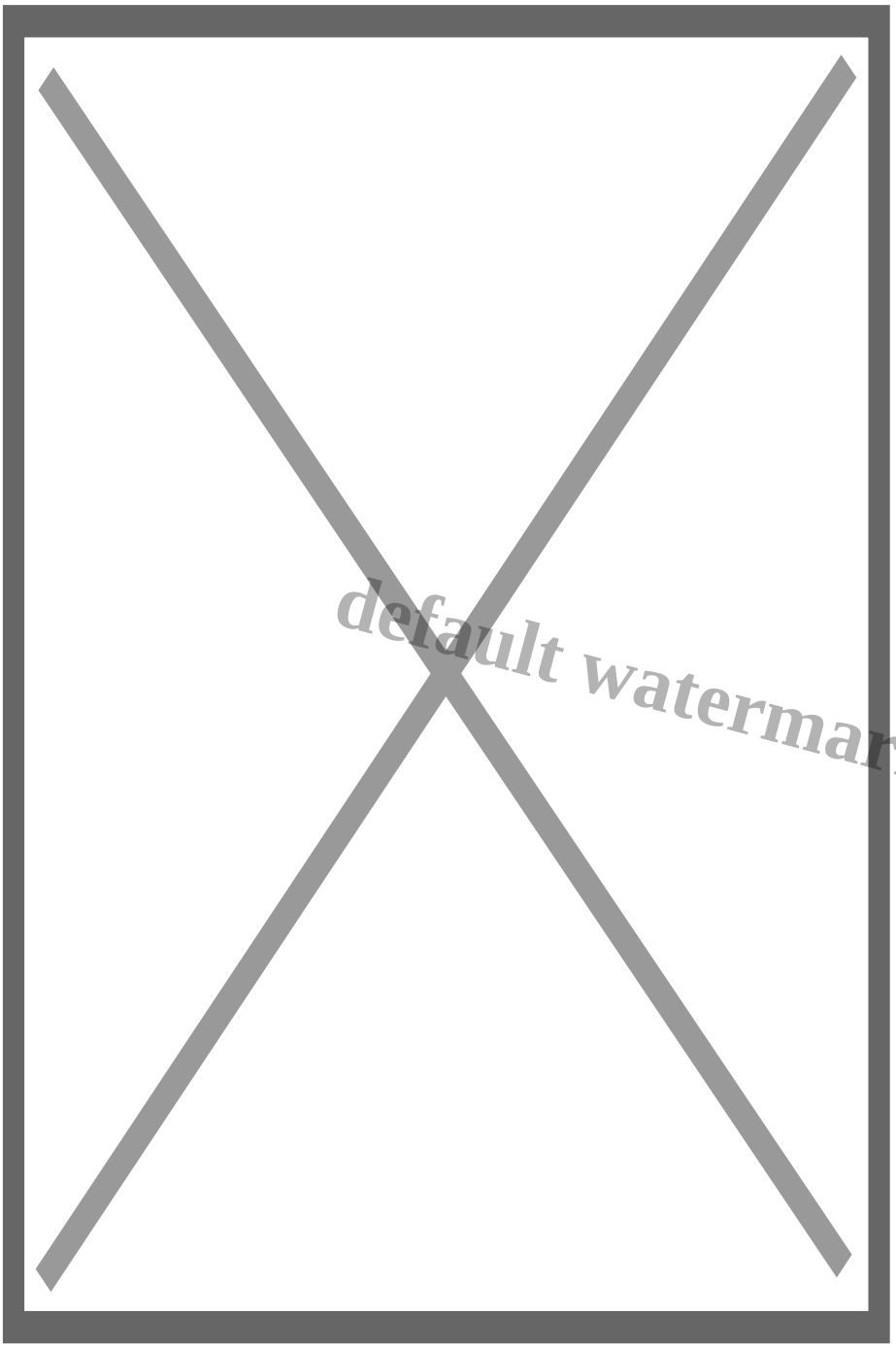
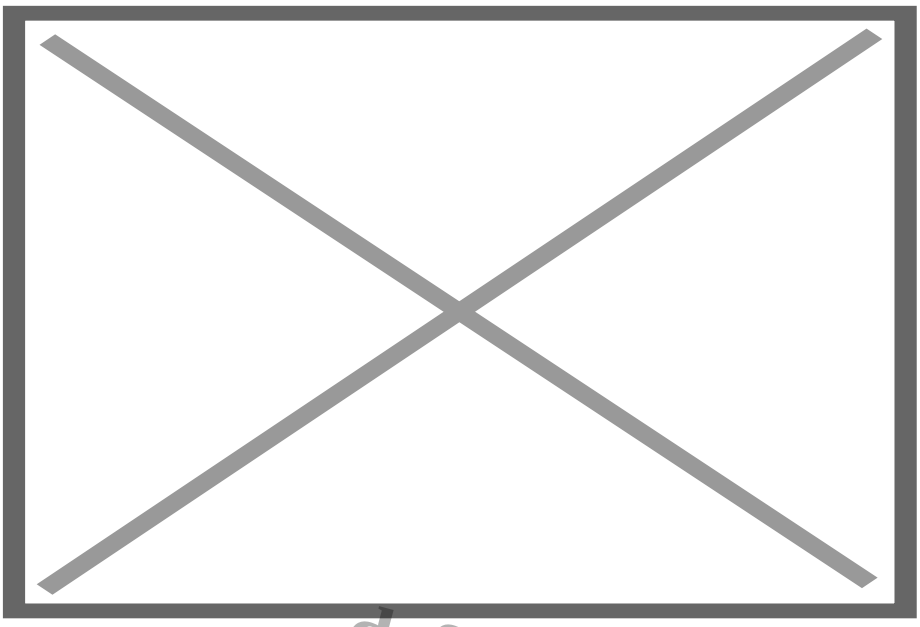


4. Avocado â€“ Just chunks of plain avocado spread across and mixed into your salad gives you the creamy texture of those heavy dressings, but in the form of one ingredient, and a healthy one at that! To avoid it from turning brown to quickly, sprinkle a little lemon juice on top. Lemon juice also adds a little something extra to your salad with no cost to your calorie budget!



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5. Vinegar â€“ Unlike the bottled vinaigrettes with sugar and oil added, I go for the plain vinegar types. With varieties like red wine, balsamic, apple cider, and more, youâ€™re bound to find one you like. Itâ€™s strong enough to where you donâ€™t need much, and goes well if youâ€™re using avocado or nuts and/or seeds. The fat youâ€™re getting from these offers more nutrition than the processed oil in dressing.

6. Papaya Seeds â€“ Yes, you read right, seeds from the papaya fruit. I love to buy fresh papaya, cut it into chunks and freeze for appetizing blender concoctions; but what about all of the seeds in the middle? Unlike the fruit that encompasses them, the seeds have a pleasant peppery taste which pairs well on salads. Try it. Papayas are easy to prepare; just peel the soft skin, cut down the middle, and viola, you have the seeds! Scoop out the seeds and keep in an airtight container in the fridge; then enjoy fresh papaya as youâ€™d like.

Not only are these healthy ways to top your salad, but they are interesting and even fun to try. Iâ€™ve used all of these and even mix several at a time to come up with new flavors. Try setting out different options to have your kids try ones they are most interested in, they will have fun creating their own â€œdressingâ€•.

Above all, these can be used year round, so donâ€™t limit yourself to just special occasions; reap the benefits of healthy choices every day! If youâ€™re in the U.S., have a happy and safe Fourth of July!

Since I canâ€™t have a post without giving you at least one pic of Avery, hereâ€™s what sheâ€™ll be doing for the 4thâ€¦.

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Iâ€™ll have a breast milk martiniâ€¦.shaken, not stirred.

Have you used any of these as salad dressings before? Do you have any others?

Do you have any plans for July 4th? *Going Mom, Avery, and I are going to G-Maâ€™s house to watch fireworks in the neighborhood and enjoy each otherâ€™s company. This will be our first 2-night stay with Avery, so hope it goes well!*

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