

# Via Carota's Insalata Verde

By Samin Nosrat

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**Total Time** 15 minutes

**Rating** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (5,214)

At Via Carota, the charming West Village restaurant run by the partners Jody Williams and Rita Sodi, the menu description for insalata verde does little to give away any details about what makes it so unbelievably, mouth-smackingly perfect. A visual inspection of the dish reveals only leaves of endive, butter lettuce, frisée and watercress all piled as high as gravity will allow, topped by a drizzle of dressing studded generously with shallots and mustard seeds. In truth, all the secrets of this otherworldly salad lay in the graceful, unlikely application of a flavorless one: water. First, the five carefully chosen types of lettuce are all triple-washed to yield what Williams called “a super happy salad.” Next, the minced shallots are given a quick rinse under cold water — instead of a long maceration in vinegar — to keep them shalloty and savory and prevent them from becoming too acidic, which could overwhelm the delicate lettuces. And finally, and perhaps most surprising, Williams adds a spoonful of warm water to the vinaigrette. “We add warm water to make it more palatable,” she explained. “Pure vinegar is just too strong — it assaults the taste buds. We want a salad dressing so savory and delicious that you can eat spoonfuls of it. We want you to be able to drink it!” This might just become your go-to vinaigrette. Spoon it liberally over everything from boiled asparagus to farro salad to steak and fish and roast chicken. It’s so good that you might even be tempted to pour it into a glass and top it off with sparkling water.

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## INGREDIENTS

**Yield:** 6 to 8 servings

- 2 heads butter lettuce, such as Boston or bibb
- 1 romaine heart
- 1 large Belgian endive
- 1 bunch watercress

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## PREPARATION

½ small head frisée

**FOR THE DRESSING**

- 1 large shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon aged sherry vinegar, plus additional, as needed
- 1 tablespoon warm water
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1½ teaspoons whole-grain mustard
- 1½ teaspoons honey (optional)
- 2 sprigs thyme, washed and stripped
- 1 large clove garlic, finely grated
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**Step 1**

Wash the greens: Fill a sink or large basin with tepid water. Remove any wilted or damaged leaves from the butter lettuce, romaine and endive. Trim each head at the root to release whole leaves. Leave butter-lettuce leaves whole, but halve large leaves of romaine and endive on the bias, then drop into water. Trim and discard any roots and long stems off watercress, and drop remaining leaves and tender stems into water. Trim and discard dark green outer leaves and tops from frisée until only light green and white parts remain. Trim at the root to release leaves, and drop into water. Swirl greens in water, then drain. Wash twice more in cool, then cold, water, then transfer to a salad spinner to dry. Gently wrap in clean dish towels, and set aside.

**Step 2**

Place the shallot in a fine-mesh strainer, and quickly rinse with cold water. Allow to drain, then place in a medium bowl, and add vinegar and warm water. Allow to sit for 2 minutes, then whisk in oil, mustards, honey (if using), thyme, garlic and a large pinch of salt. Taste, and adjust salt and vinegar as needed.

**Step 3**

To serve, gently pile a generous handful of greens into a serving bowl, then sprinkle with salt, pepper and a generous drizzle of dressing. Continue with another handful of salad and more seasoning and dressing, repeating until you have a glorious, gravity-defying mound of salad. Top with a final drizzle of dressing, and serve immediately.

**Step 4**

Wrap remaining greens in an airtight container or plastic bag and refrigerate for up to 3 days. Cover and refrigerate remaining dressing for up to 3 days.

**TIP**

*When shopping, select small, bright, fresh heads of greens.*

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**Private Notes**

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