

Hearts of Romaine with Blue Cheese, Toasted Chile Pecans, and Sliced Pear

Author: Adapted slightly from a Katherine Kagel recipe from Cafe Pasqual's in Santa Fe, New Mexico



2 heads romaine lettuce
 2 whole pears, cored and sliced lengthwise
 freshly coarse-ground black pepper
 1 large lemon, halved and seeded
 1 large grapefruit, cut into supremes (optional)
 fresh minced basil and mint for garnish

BLUE CHEESE DRESSING:

1/4 cup blue cheese, Maytag, or other good quality creamy blue
 1/2 cup sour cream
 1/2 cup buttermilk
 1/4 cup half and half
 2 ounces goat cheese, soft - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup crumbled
 1 whole orange, juice only
 1 tablespoon mint leaves, fresh, stemmed, minced
 2 teaspoons basil leaves, fresh, stemmed, minced
 1/2 small shallot, minced
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 freshly ground black pepper

TOASTED CHILE PECANS:

1 cup pecan halves
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 1 tablespoon Chimayó chile powder
 2 teaspoons sugar
 2 teaspoons Kahlúa

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 560 Calories; 38g Fat (57.4% calories from fat); 18g Protein; 46g Carbohydrate; 13g Dietary Fiber; 40mg Cholesterol; 387mg Sodium. Exchanges: 1/2 Grain(Starch); 1 Lean Meat; 2 Vegetable; 1 1/2 Fruit; 1/2 Non-Fat Milk; 7 Fat; 0 Other Carbohydrates.

Carolyn T's Tasting Spoons blog:

<http://tastingspoons.com>

Description: An entree type salad (no meat) with loads of layered flavors.

Notes: The grapefruit supremes weren't in the recipe, but it went well with the dish. I used light sour cream, low-fat buttermilk and fat-free half and half. You will want to use all of the salad dressing.

1. To prepare the dressing, in a mixing bowl combine all ingredients except the mint and basil leaves. Mix thoroughly. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Cover and refrigerate for up to 3-4 days. On the day of serving, add the mint and basil.
2. Preheat the oven to 300° F. Place the pecans in a bowl, toss the nuts with oil until evenly coated. Add the chile powder and sugar and toss again. Spread the nuts out on a baking sheet and place in the oven for 20 minutes, stirring frequently, until toasted. Do not allow them to burn! Set aside to cool. Can be done ahead of time. Before serving sprinkle Kahlúa over nuts.
3. To prepare the romaine hearts, wash, dry, then wrap in a cloth or paper towel and chill for at least one hour before serving. Slice each romaine heart vertically in half. On each of four large dinner plates, place hearts cut side up and drizzle dressing over until fairly well covered. Sprinkle the pecans (drizzled with the Kahlúa) over the leaves. Decorate with pear slices (and grapefruit, if using) on top and to the sides of the hearts. Grind black pepper over all, then squeeze the juice of one large lemon over the salads. Garnish with additional mint and basil if desired. Serve immediately.