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Spinach Salad with Roasted Cherry Tomatoes

Roasting tomatoes takes hardly any effort and provides a sweet and intense flavor to this classic salad. Makes 6 appetizer or side salads.

Salad:

1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
1 bag (6 ounces) Baby Spinach
1/2 red onion, halved and thinly sliced
1 cup shredded blue cheese (preferably Maytag)

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Place the tomato halves, skin side down, in a roasting pan or on a baking sheet with sides. Drizzle the oil over the tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Roast, shaking the pan after the first 10 minutes to prevent sticking until shriveled and moist tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes.

In a large salad bowl, toss the spinach with the red onion. Add the vinaigrette to taste and gently toss. Divide salad among individual plates. Top with the roasted tomatoes and blue cheese. Serve immediately.

Balsamic Dijon Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

Place the vinegar and mustard in a small bowl and whisk together. Slowly add the oil in a stream, whisking to emulsify. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Makes about 1/2 cup.

Tip: Maytag Blue Cheese has been deemed the best American blue cheese. Store bought crumbles and other grocery brands can't hold a candle to its rich creamy flavor and texture. Luckily, Maytag Blue Cheese is now available in the gourmet cheese section of most neighborhood grocery stores. It is well worth the effort to find it.