

## **Putting Heart into Your Spring**

It still amazes me when I mention how much my family loves hearts of palm how few people here in Ohio have any idea what I'm talking about. If you're one of them, the next time you are in the canned vegetable section of the supermarket check next to the canned artichoke hearts and see if you can find a can. My unofficial count over the years has about 8 out of 10 first time tasters loving them and coming back for more.



Like so many wonderful foods, hearts of palm or "swamp cabbage," as it is often called in Florida, started out years ago as a food enjoyed mostly by the poor in the sunshine state but before long its popularity spread like an Everglades' saw grass fire. It quickly became so popular that its name changed from swamp cabbage to millionaires' salad and Florida had to enact laws to protect it from ravenous enthusiasts. Harvesting of the sabal palmetto, Florida's state tree, is now illegal.

Most of the hearts of palm we now enjoy in the United States comes to us from South and Central America, particularly Brazil, where it is farmed as a profitable cash crop providing a source of income to families that would normally be harvesting lumber in the Amazon forest. So supporting these farmers is a very good thing for all of us on planet Earth who rely on the rain forest for a large percentage of the oxygen we breath.

It doesn't hurt that hearts of palm have no cholesterol, great natural fiber content, hardly any fat in them and are very low in calories. I know if there's any chance of me getting into a Speedo this summer and not terrifying the family dog, finding lots of healthy, low calorie snacks is not an option; it should be the law.

I guess the toughest part of describing ways to enjoy hearts of palm stems from the fact that it is great by itself straight out of the can. It has a taste all its own, the texture is one of its most attractive features, and it is pretty on the plate. Most often we will have it with a drizzle of salad dressing and nothing else. Here are two of my favorite dressings that are great with hearts and equally enjoyable with a green salad.

### **Homemade Green Goddess**

1 cup fat free or low fat mayonnaise  
½ cup (4 ounces) low fat sour cream  
1½ tablespoons snipped fresh parsley  
¼ cup finely minced green onions with tops  
2 tablespoons lemon juice

½ clove garlic, crushed to a paste  
½ teaspoon sea salt, optional  
Dash of fresh ground pepper

Stir together all of the ingredients in a non-reactive medium bowl until well combined. If you are not using the dressing right away cover and chill. It will hold up well in the refrigerator for about a week. Makes about 2 cups.

### **Parmesan Curry Dressing**

½ cup plain nonfat yogurt  
½ cup low fat buttermilk  
1 ½ teaspoons granulated sugar  
1 ½ tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese  
¼ teaspoon fresh ground papper  
1/8 teaspoon onion powder  
1 teaspoon capers  
1/8 teaspoon curry powder

Place all of your ingredients in a blender or food processor and thoroughly blend. Chill or serve immediately. Also, this dressing is excellent over a green salad. Makes about 1 cup.

This next recipe is a Brazilian favorite that I enjoyed for the first time in Rio de Janeiro about 20 years ago. It is a terrific salad to have as a stand-alone for lunch with slices of crusty bread and a little dish of olive oil for dipping.

### **Hearts of Palm Salad (Salada de Palmito)**

For the salad:

1 (15 ounce) can of hearts of palm, drained and sliced in ¾-inch slices, about 1 ½ cups  
1 (16 ounce) can of pitted medium black olives, drained  
10 ounces of frozen peas  
½ minced red onion  
3 medium vine ripened tomatoes, cut into wedges  
1/3 cup chopped parsley  
8 ounces of feta cheese in small cubes



For the dressing:

1/3 cup red wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon prepared yellow mustard  
4 cloves garlic, passed through a press

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper  
½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Start out by combining all of the salad ingredients in a bowl holding the feta cheese to the side for later. In a separate bowl, combine all of the ingredients except for the olive oil and mix. Blend in the oil and season to taste. Pour the dressing over the salad and refrigerate several hours before serving. To serve, toss with the feta cheese and place on leaves of Romaine lettuce.

My pick this week for your spring and summer wine inventory is a really delightful white Bordeaux, the 2002 Chateau de L'Eglise Cuvee d' Excellence Sauvignon Blanc. This white is perfect with salads, all kinds of shellfish and seafood or just well chilled as a warm weather cocktail. The delicate grassiness is well balanced with hints of melon and fresh lemons providing a fun wine drinking experience. This is a modestly priced very well crafted white wine that would be easy to serve and sure to meet most peoples personal taste preferences.

Please let us know if you have questions related to your wine needs or want to just chat about great foods. We love to hear from you. Our number is 888-288-0668 or you can reach out and touch us on the web at [www.winedog.com](http://www.winedog.com). Have a great week! Cheers.