

# Mixed Chicory Caesar with “Cacio e Pepe” Croutons

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Inspired by spaghetti cacio e pepe, John McConnell got the idea to toss hot toasted croutons with grated cheese and black pepper. The cheese melts on contact. Instead of slicing the baguette for the croutons, he tears it into rough chunks. It's more rustic and creates more crevices to trap the seasonings. The croutons are best warm, so if you have made them ahead, reheat them before adding them to the salad. Leftover dressing is great with steamed artichokes, cauliflower, or other steamed vegetables. McConnell leaves anchovies out of the dressing because he is cooking for a broad audience at Bruschetta, the Clif Family Winery's food truck, but I add one or two fillets, minced to a paste. From *GATHER: Casual Cooking from Wine Country Gardens* by Janet Fletcher (Abrams).

## Ingredients

### Dressing:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1-1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1-1/2 teaspoons Thai or Vietnamese fish sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### "Cacio e Pepe" croutons:

- 1/2 sourdough baguette, torn into rough bite-size pieces
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- 1/4 cup freshly grated pecorino romano or Parmigiano Reggiano

### Salad:

- 3 quarts torn mixed chicories, such as radicchio, escarole and frisée, plus arugula
- 1 cup thinly sliced radishes, including small daikon and watermelon radishes if available
- Chunk of Parmigiano-Reggiano for shaving

## Directions

**Make the dressing:** In a bowl, whisk together all the dressing ingredients. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

**Make the croutons:** Preheat the oven to 350°F with convection fan or 375°F with no fan. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment. In a bowl, toss the torn croutons with the olive oil and pepper, then arrange them on the baking sheet in a single layer. Bake until they are lightly browned in spots, about 8 minutes. Immediately transfer them to a bowl and, while they are hot, toss them with the grated cheese.

Toss the chicories, arugula and radishes with enough of the dressing to coat lightly. Arrange attractively on a serving platter, then scatter the croutons on top. Using a vegetable peeler, shave as much cheese as you like over the top. Serve immediately.

**Serves 6**



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