

Friday, May 16, 2008

Bacon, Lettuce, and Grilled Tomato Salad

Prep time: 20 minutes

Grilling time: 6 to 7 minutes

1/2 pound thick-sliced bacon, cut into bite-size pieces
Extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons minced shallot
1-1/2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh thyme
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1-1/2 pints cherry tomatoes, stemmed
1 large crusty sandwich roll, cut in half lengthwise
1 to 2 medium heads butter lettuce
2 to 3 scallions, white and light green parts, thinly sliced

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the bacon until crisp. With a slotted spoon transfer the bacon to paper towels, reserving the bacon fat. Add enough olive oil to the bacon fat to make 6 tablespoons.
2. In a small bowl mix the shallot, vinegar, thyme, salt, and pepper. Whisk in the bacon fat/oil mixture in a steady stream to make a dressing.
3. Lightly coat the tomatoes with some of the dressing. Grill the tomatoes in a preheated, perforated grill pan over **direct medium heat** (350°F to 450°), with the lid closed as much as possible, until their skins begin to char and crack, 5 to 6 minutes, shaking the basket with an insulated mitt to turn them. Using the insulated mitt, carefully remove the vegetable basket from the grill and pour the tomatoes into a bowl.
4. Brush the cut side of the roll with some of the dressing and grill over **direct medium heat**, with the lid open, until toasted, about 1 minute, without turning. Remove from the grill and cut into large croutons.
5. Arrange the lettuce leaves in a serving bowl. Add the tomatoes with their juices, as well as the croutons, among the lettuce leaves. Whisk the dressing one more time and spoon some over the salad (you may not need all of it). Top with the bacon and finish with the scallions. Serve right away at room temperature.

Makes 4 servings

Grilling Tip:

A perforated grill pan prevents small tomatoes from falling through the cooking grate.