



Festive Pear and Pecan Salad with Parmesan

The Pears in the Pan

Let me tell you about the pears. You cook them in a hot pan. They get sweet and golden brown. It smells like a cozy afternoon.

I still laugh at that sizzle sound. It always makes my cat look up. The trick is to let them sit. Don't move them too soon. That gives them a nice color.

Why We Toss with Care

Mixing the salad is important. You must be gentle. Treat the leaves like a soft blanket. This keeps them crisp and happy.

Why does this matter? Food feels better when made with care. A rough toss bruises the greens. A gentle hand shows love. Do you have a favorite kitchen tool for mixing?

A Story About Watercress

My friend Margot grew watercress by a creek. She brought me a bunch once. It was so peppery and fresh. We made a tiny salad right then.

That's why I love it in this dish. Its little bite is perfect. It balances the sweet pear. *Fun fact: watercress is one of the oldest leafy greens people have eaten!*

The Taste of Together

Now, taste each part. Sweet pear, sharp cheese, crunchy nuts. Doesn't that sound amazing? They are good alone. But together, they sing.

Why this matters is simple. Meals are about bringing things together. Different flavors, like different people, make things special. What's your favorite sweet-and-salty combo?

Make It Your Own

This salad is a friend, not a boss. No pecans? Try walnuts. No Parmesan? A hard goat cheese works too. Cooking is about using what you have.

I sometimes add a few apple slices. It's still wonderful. The goal is a plate that makes you smile. Would you try this with apples or stick with pears?

See also Festive Braised Brisket with Onion Confit

Ingredients:

| Ingredient | Amount | Notes |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pears | 3 (8 ounces each) | Quartered and cored |
| Sugar | 2 ½ teaspoons | Divided |
| Salt and pepper | To taste | |
| Extra-virgin olive oil | 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons | Divided |
| Balsamic vinegar | ¼ cup | Divided |
| Shallot | 1 small | Minced |
| Green leaf lettuce | ½ head (6 ounces) | Torn into 1-inch pieces |
| Watercress | 4 ounces (4 cups) | |
| Pecans | ¾ cup | Toasted and chopped |
| Parmesan cheese | To taste | Shaved |



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Instructions

Step 1: Gently toss your pear quarters with sugar, salt, and pepper. Heat oil in a pan until it shimmers. Place pears cut-side down. Don't move them! Let them get golden and sweet. This smell reminds me of autumn fairs. (A hot pan gives you the best caramel color.)

Step 2: Turn off the heat. Now, carefully add the balsamic vinegar. It will sizzle and bubble right away. Stir gently until the pears look shiny and dressed. Then let them cool completely on a plate. Patience makes the salad crisp!

Step 3: Time for the dressing! Whisk oil, vinegar, sugar, and shallot in your big bowl. Shallots are milder than onions, don't you think? Season it just right with salt and pepper. This is where you taste with your heart.

Step 4: Add the lettuce, watercress, and cooled pears to the bowl. Toss everything with love until it's all dressed. I still laugh at how I used to toss salad too hard. Divide the salad among your plates. It looks so pretty already!

Step 5: Finally, sprinkle with toasted pecans and fluffy Parmesan shavings. Serve it right away for the best crunch. What's your favorite part: the sweet pears or the salty cheese? Share below!

See also [Cherry Chocolate Yuletide Drops](#)

Creative Twists

This salad is like a friendly canvas. You can paint it with your favorite flavors. Try a different nut or cheese for a whole new adventure. I love seeing what you come up with in your own kitchen.

Apple Swap: Use crisp apple slices instead of pears in the fall.

Cheese Change: Try creamy goat cheese crumbles instead of Parmesan.

Nutty Idea: Use walnuts or candied pecans for extra fun.

Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving & Pairing Ideas

This salad is a wonderful start to a cozy meal. I like to serve it on a big platter for everyone to share. It pairs beautifully with simple, hearty dishes. Doesn't that sound nice for a gathering?

Try it beside a warm soup or a roasted chicken. For a drink, a chilled apple cider is perfect. Grown-ups might enjoy a glass of crisp white wine. It all just feels right together.

Which would you choose tonight?



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Keeping Your Salad Fresh and Bright

This salad is best enjoyed right away. But life happens! You can prepare parts ahead. Keep the dressing, greens, and pears separate in the fridge. They will stay good for one day.

Store the toasted pecans at room temperature. Put them in a little jar. I once mixed everything the night before. The greens were so sad and wilted in the morning. Now I know better!

Batch cooking saves busy weeknights. You can pan-roast extra pears. Cool them and store them in a container. Having them ready makes a fancy salad feel easy. This matters because good food should fit your real life.

See also [Glazed Carrots with Cranberry Glaze](#)

Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!

Simple Fixes for Common Salad Hiccups

First, your pears might not brown. Your pan was not hot enough. Wait until the oil shimmers. I remember when my pears just steamed. A hot pan gives them sweet, caramelized spots.

Second, the vinegar might not get glazy. The heat was too low. Turn off the burner but leave the pan on it. The leftover heat is perfect. This matters because that glaze adds a lovely sweet-tart flavor.

Third, your greens could get soggy. Always let the pears cool fully. Toss everything just before you serve. This matters because a crisp bite

makes the salad special. It builds your cooking confidence.

Which of these problems have you run into before?

Your Quick Questions, Answered

Q: Is this salad gluten-free?

A: Yes, all the ingredients are naturally gluten-free. Just check your vinegar label to be sure.

Q: Can I make any part ahead?

A: Absolutely! Cook and cool the pears. Make the dressing. Toast the pecans. Do all this up to a day before.

Q: What if I don't have watercress?

A: Baby arugula or spinach works nicely. You just want a little peppery bite.

Q: Can I double the recipe?

A: You can, but cook the pears in batches. Do not crowd the pan. They need space to brown.

Q: Is the Parmesan optional?

A: It adds a salty, savory punch. But the salad is still lovely without it.

Fun fact: Real Parmesan cheese is always gluten-free.

Which tip will you try first?

From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope this recipe brings a little festivity to your table. The mix of sweet pear and salty cheese is magic. It always reminds me of autumn lunches with my grandchildren.

I would love to hear about your cooking adventure. Tell me how it went for you. Your stories are my favorite thing to read.

Have you tried this recipe? Please leave a comment below and let me know. Happy cooking!

—Elowen Thorn.





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