



Festive Seven Layer Holiday Salad

My Holiday Table Secret

Hello, my dear. Come sit with me. I want to share my favorite holiday salad. It is a beauty in a bowl. It has seven colorful layers. We call it a “seven layer salad” in our family.

I first made this for my husband’s mother. She was very fancy. I was so nervous. But she loved it. She asked for the recipe. I still laugh at that. Do you have a dish that makes you proud to share?

The Sweet, Crunchy Start

We start with the candied walnuts. This is the fun part. You cook

walnuts with sugar and butter. You must stir and stir. The sugar melts into a shiny coat.

Then you spread them on paper to cool. They get hard and crunchy.

Fun fact: this is called "candying." It turns a simple nut into a tiny holiday treat. Be careful, they are very hot. Let them cool completely.

Building the Rainbow

Now, find a clear glass bowl. A trifle dish is perfect. You see all the colors this way. First, the green lettuce. Then, the purple onion. Next, the white apples. Finally, the red cranberries.

It looks like a garden in glass. This matters because we eat first with our eyes. A pretty dish makes everyone smile. Doesn't that look cheerful already?

The Creamy Magic Coat

The dressing is the magic. It holds everything together. You mix mayo, sour cream, and a few other things. The maple syrup is my special touch. It adds a gentle sweetness.

You pour it right over the layered veggies. Smooth it like frosting on a cake. Then, you must wait. You cover it and let it get cold in the fridge. This matters. The flavors get to know each other. It makes every bite perfect.

The Grand Finale

Just before serving, we finish it. Sprinkle on the blue cheese, the bacon, and our candied walnuts. Oh, the smell is wonderful. Savory, sweet, and

smoky all at once.

You can toss it gently or leave it layered. I like to see the layers. It starts a conversation. Which layer do you think you'd pick out first? The bacon or the apple?

Why This Old Recipe Stays

This salad is more than food. It is a tradition. It sits on the table, bright and full of good things. It reminds us to mix different flavors and textures. Just like family.

Every bite has something soft, something crunchy, something sweet, and something tangy. Life is like that too, isn't it? A mix of all kinds of moments. What is a food that feels like a tradition to you? I would love to hear.

See also [Cherry Garcia Holiday Fudge](#)

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Chopped romaine or iceberg lettuce	5 cups	
Red onion, finely chopped	1 large	
Chopped apples	2 cups	
Dried cranberries, roughly chopped	2 cups	
Cooked bacon, crumbled	6 slices	For topping
Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled	1 cup	For topping
Chopped walnuts	1 cup	For candied walnuts
Granulated sugar	1/4 cup	For candied walnuts
Unsalted butter	1 tablespoon	For candied walnuts

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Mayonnaise	1 cup	For dressing
Sour cream	1 cup	For dressing
Dijon mustard	1 tablespoon	For dressing
Apple cider vinegar	1 tablespoon	For dressing
Maple syrup	2 tablespoons	For dressing
Kosher salt and black pepper	To taste	For dressing



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Instructions

Step 1: Let's make the candied walnuts first. Heat a skillet over medium. Add walnuts, sugar, and butter. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring a lot. When the sugar melts, stir constantly so it doesn't burn. (The sugar goes from perfect to burnt in a blink!) Once the nuts are coated, spread them on parchment paper. Use your spatula to separate them. Let them cool for 5-7 minutes until they're crunchy. **What's your favorite nut to candy? Share below!**

Step 2: Now, let's build our pretty layers. Use a clear glass bowl so everyone can see them. Spread the chopped lettuce evenly on the bottom. That's our green foundation. Next, sprinkle on the finely chopped red onion. Then, add a happy layer of chopped apples. I like a tart green apple here. Finally, scatter the dried cranberries over the apples. Doesn't that look like a holiday ribbon?

Step 3: Time for the dressing. In a medium bowl, whisk the mayonnaise and sour cream together. Add the Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar, and maple syrup. Give it a good whisk until it's smooth and creamy. Now, taste it. Season with a little salt and pepper until it's just right for you. (Always taste your dressing before it goes on the salad!)

Step 4: Pour that creamy dressing right over your layered salad. Use a spatula to spread it gently to the edges. This seals in all the flavors. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap. Pop it in the fridge to chill. You can make this up to two days ahead. I still laugh at how impatient I get waiting for it.

Step 5: Just before your guests arrive, take the salad out. Now for the

fun toppings! Sprinkle the crumbled bacon and gorgonzola cheese over the top. Finally, add your beautiful candied walnuts. You can give it one gentle toss at the table, or leave the layers be. Serve it right away for the best crunch. Enjoy every bite!

Creative Twists

This salad is wonderful as written. But sometimes, you just want to play. Here are three simple twists. **Use crisp pear instead of apple for a sweeter layer. Try blue cheese crumbles if gorgonzola is too strong. Swap the walnuts for pecans for a southern touch.** Each little change makes it your own. Which one would you try first? Comment below!

See also [Holiday Creme Brulee Noel](#)

Serving & Pairing Ideas

This salad is a celebration on its own. But it loves good company. Serve it with a warm, crusty bread for dipping. A simple roasted chicken makes it a full meal. For drinks, a sparkling apple cider is perfect for everyone. For the grown-ups, a chilled glass of Riesling wine pairs beautifully. The sweet wine loves the tangy cheese and apples. Which would you choose tonight?



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Keeping Your Holiday Salad Fresh

This salad is best eaten the day you make it. But life gets busy! You can store it in the fridge for up to two days. Keep it covered tightly with plastic wrap.

Do not freeze this salad. The lettuce and dressing will become a sad, soggy mess. I learned this the hard way years ago! My frozen salad turned into a puddle.

You can batch-cook parts ahead. Make the candied walnuts and bacon days before. Store them in separate containers at room temperature. This saves you so much time on a busy day.

Planning ahead matters. It turns a stressful meal into a joyful one. You get to enjoy your own party! **Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!**

Simple Fixes for Common Salad Troubles

First, your candied walnuts might burn. The sugar goes from golden to black fast! Stir them constantly over medium heat. I once got distracted by a phone call. My poor walnuts were charcoal.

Second, the apples might turn brown. Toss your chopped apples with a little lemon juice. This keeps them looking fresh and pretty. It also adds a nice little zing of flavor.

Third, the dressing can be too thick. Just add a teaspoon of milk or water. Whisk it in until it's nice and pourable. Getting these small things right builds your cooking confidence. It also makes every bite taste

perfect. **Which of these problems have you run into before?**

Your Quick Questions, Answered

Q: Is this salad gluten-free? A: Yes, it is! Just check your bacon and dressing labels to be sure.

Q: Can I make it ahead? A: You can layer everything but the toppings. Add the cheese, bacon, and walnuts right before serving.

Q: What if I don't like gorgonzola? A: Use feta or cheddar cheese instead. It will still be delicious.

See also Fluffy Gluten Free Holiday Rolls

Q: Can I make a smaller batch? A: Of course! Just cut all the ingredients in half. Use a smaller bowl.

Q: Any optional tips? A: Try using pears instead of apples. *Fun fact: This salad is sometimes called "Seven Layer Salad" or "Christmas Salad" in old community cookbooks.* **Which tip will you try first?**

A Note From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope this recipe brings joy to your table. Food is about sharing stories and making memories. My grandkids love sprinkling the toppings on this salad.

I would love to hear about your cooking adventure. Tell me about your family's favorite holiday dish. **Have you tried this recipe?** Let me know how it turned out in the comments below.

Happy cooking!

—Elowen Thorn.



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Festive Seven Layer Holiday Salad

Author: Elowen Thorn

Cooking Method:[No-Cook Stovetop](#)

Cuisine:[American](#)



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Courses:[Side Salad](#)

Difficulty: **Beginner**



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Prep time: **25 minutes**

Cook time: **5 minutes**

Chill time: **30 minutes**



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Total time: **1 hour**



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Servings: 8 servings



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Calories: **580 kcal**

Best Season:**Summer**

Description

A vibrant and festive layered salad featuring crisp lettuce, sweet apples,

tangy cranberries, savory bacon, gorgonzola, and homemade candied walnuts, all tied together with a creamy maple dressing.

Ingredients

- 5 cups chopped romaine or iceberg lettuce
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups chopped apples
- 2 cups roughly chopped dried cranberries
- 6 slices cooked bacon, crumbled
- 1 cup crumbled gorgonzola cheese

Candied Walnuts:

- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. **Prepare the Candied Walnuts:** Heat a non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add the walnuts, granulated sugar, and butter. Cook

for approximately 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Once the sugar begins to melt, continue stirring constantly to prevent burning. When the nuts are fully coated and the sugar has melted, transfer them to a sheet of parchment paper. Use a spatula to separate the pieces. Allow the walnuts to cool for 5-7 minutes, or until the sugar has hardened.

2. **Assemble the Salad:** In a trifle dish or a large clear glass bowl, evenly spread the lettuce along the bottom to form the first layer. Add successive layers in the following order: red onion, apples, and dried cranberries.
3. **Prepare the Dressing:** In a medium bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream, Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar, and maple syrup. Season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.
4. **Dress and Chill:** Pour the dressing evenly over the layered salad. Smooth the top using a spatula. Cover the dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve. The salad may be chilled for up to 2 days.
5. **Finish and Serve:** Just before serving, sprinkle the gorgonzola cheese, crumbled bacon, and candied walnuts over the top. Toss gently, if desired, and serve promptly.

Notes

For best results, assemble the salad up to a day in advance, but add the final toppings (cheese, bacon, walnuts) right before serving to maintain their texture.

Keywords: Holiday Salad, Layered Salad, Cranberry, Walnut, Bacon, Gorgonzola