

The Fall Salad Planner

A printable companion to the apple, cranberry and walnut salad

Print this planner and keep it in your recipe folder. It gives you the shopping list, the vinaigrette ratio, the apple variety card, the make-ahead timeline and the assembly checklist for this salad — everything you need at the counter, without scrolling through the article again.

Shopping List

Section	Item	On hand?
Produce	Baby greens — arugula, baby spinach or a spring mix (5 oz / 140 g)	
Produce	Crisp apples, 2 (one red, one green)	
Produce	Red onion, 1 small	
Produce	Garlic, 1 clove	
Pantry	Dried cranberries (3/4 cup)	
Pantry	Walnut halves (1 cup)	
Pantry	Granulated sugar (2 tbsp, for candying)	
Pantry	Apple cider vinegar (1/4 cup)	
Pantry	Pure maple syrup or honey (3 tbsp)	
Pantry	Dijon mustard (2 tsp)	
Pantry	Extra-virgin olive oil (2/3 cup)	
Pantry	Fine sea salt and black pepper	
Chiller	Blue cheese or feta, crumbled (4 oz)	
Optional	Flaky sea salt, for finishing	

Buying note: one lemon or a teaspoon of salt covers the apples if you are slicing them more than twenty minutes ahead. See the apple card below.

The Vinaigrette Ratio Card

This is the only number worth memorising. Everything else in the salad can be adjusted by taste, but the dressing only works at this proportion.

Part	Ingredient	Amount
1	Apple cider vinegar	1/4 cup (4 tbsp)
1	Pure maple syrup or honey	3 tbsp
1	Dijon mustard	2 tsp

Part	Ingredient	Amount
1	Garlic, grated	1 small clove
1	Fine sea salt	3/4 tsp
1	Black pepper, freshly ground	1/2 tsp
1 1/2	Extra-virgin olive oil	2/3 cup

Whisk or shake until it looks like a thin cream. Taste on a leaf, not on a spoon — dressing always seems sharper off the spoon than it does on greens. Makes about 1 cup, enough for two batches of salad.

Apple Variety Card

Apple	Sweet / Tart	Best for	Slice holds colour?
Honeycrisp	Sweet, very juicy	The all-rounder; best on the plate	Average
Fuji	Sweet, dense	Longest-lasting crunch	Good
Gala	Mildly sweet	Feeding a crowd cheaply	Average
Granny Smith	Sharply tart	Balancing a sweet dressing	Good
Pink Lady	Tart-sweet	The best red-and-green pairing	Good
Braeburn	Balanced, spicy	Sliced ahead of time	Best
Red Delicious	Bland, softens fast	Avoid here	Poor

The two-apple rule: one sweet, one tart, sliced the same thickness. One variety alone tastes flat in a salad; two makes the bowl taste seasoned.

Candied Walnuts in Six Steps

1. Line a tray with parchment and set it next to the hob before you begin. Caramel waits for nobody.
2. Warm 1 cup of walnut halves in a dry non-stick pan over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes, until they smell toasted and turn a shade darker. Move them constantly.
3. Add 2 tbsp sugar and 1 tbsp butter. Stir without stopping for 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Keep going until the sugar melts, darkens to the colour of weak tea and coats every walnut. If it starts to smoke, pull the pan off the heat for ten seconds and keep stirring.
5. Tip them straight onto the parchment and spread them into a single layer with the spatula. Do not touch them yet.
6. Leave for 15 minutes to harden, then break them into clusters. Store airtight for up to a week.

Safety: melted sugar reaches well past boiling point and sticks to skin. Keep water away from the pan and use a dry spoon. If the sugar seizes into a solid lump, add 1 tsp of water and keep stirring over low heat until it loosens.

The Make-Ahead Timeline

Up to 1 week ahead	Candy the walnuts and store them airtight at room temperature. Make the vinaigrette and refrigerate it in a jar.
Up to 2 days ahead	Crumbles the cheese, slice the onion and measure the cranberries. Keep the onion in cold water in the fridge so it stays crisp and mild.
Up to 8 hours ahead	Wash and dry the greens, then roll them in a clean tea towel and bag them. Dry leaves are the difference between a dressed salad and a soggy one.
Up to 2 hours ahead	Slice the apples and hold them submerged in salted water — 1 tsp of salt to 1 cup of cold water — then drain and pat dry before assembling.
In the last 5 minutes	Dress the greens in the bottom of the bowl, then build the layers on top. Nothing gets soggy and the bowl still looks composed.

Assembly Checklist

- Greens washed and properly dried — no water clinging to the leaves
- Apples sliced to an even thickness, one sweet variety and one tart
- Walnuts broken into bite-sized clusters, not dust
- Onion shaved as thin as you can manage and rinsed under cold water
- Cheese crumbled into pieces big enough to spear, not grated
- Vinaigrette shaken until it looks like a thin cream
- Greens dressed in the bottom of the bowl, then layered — never the other way round
- Finished with flaky salt at the table, right before serving

Storage and Leftovers

What	How to keep it	Keeps
Undressed salad	Airtight box, chilled; keep the apples and walnuts separate	2 days
Dressed salad	Airtight box, chilled; accept the greens will soften	1 day
Vinaigrette	A jar in the fridge; let it come to room temperature and shake before use	2 weeks
Candied walnuts	Airtight jar at room temperature, away from the hob	1 week
Sliced apples	Submerged in salted water in the fridge, drained before serving	Overnight
Crumbled cheese	Airtight box in the fridge	5 days

Food safety: nothing here contains raw egg, but a dressed salad left out at room temperature for more than two hours should be discarded rather than chilled again.

Feed a Crowd

Guests	Greens	Apples	Walnuts	Cranberries	Cheese	Dressing
6	5 oz	2	1 cup	3/4 cup	4 oz	3/4 cup
12	10 oz	4	2 cups	1 1/2 cups	8 oz	1 1/2 cups
24	20 oz	8	4 cups	3 cups	1 lb	3 cups

Build in two bowls rather than one enormous one. A salad deeper than your hand cannot be tossed without bruising the greens, and the bottom half never gets any dressing.

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