

Zesty Three Bean Salad – Comfort du Jour

There is nothing new under the sun, as they say, and when I start to feel flummoxed over what side dishes to make for summer cooking, one of the best things I can do is revisit a classic and modernize it for today's palate. I have created an updated version of this good-for-you salad, shifting the flavor profile from sweet to zesty and herbaceous. The salad is quick and easy to make, as it relies somewhat on canned beans, and I've used ready-to-go fresh green beans to save time.

INGREDIENTS

3/4 lb. fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces
15 oz. can dark red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
15 oz. can garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
1/2 cup sweet onion, finely diced
1/2 cup green bell pepper, finely diced
1/2 cup red bell pepper, finely diced
1/2 cup celery, finely diced
3 large cloves garlic, finely minced
1 handful fresh Italian parsley, chopped
Small handful fresh basil leaves, chopped

DRESSING INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup red wine vinegar
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
2 tsp. cane sugar
1/2 tsp. celery seed
1/2 tsp. garlic pepper seasoning
2 Tbsp. cold water
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat a pot of water to a gentle boil. Add a generous pinch of kosher salt to the water, along with a half teaspoon of baking soda, which will help the beans retain their bright color.
2. Make dressing for the salad; combine all ingredients except the olive oil. Whisk in olive oil gradually to create an emulsion. Salt and pepper to taste.
3. Spoon the trimmed green beans into the simmering water and cook for about 6 minutes, or just until beans are tender enough to bite. Immediately spoon the cooked beans into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain beans to remove excess water.
4. Combine green beans, canned beans, peppers, onions and garlic in a large mixing bowl.
5. Pour in dressing and toss gently to combine. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Add fresh herbs and toss again.

Chill salad several hours and toss lightly to redistribute dressing just before serving. The olive oil in the dressing will solidify in the fridge, so plan to remove the salad at least ten minutes before serving for best presentation.