



## Sweet Pear and Gorgonzola Salad with Rocket, Watercress, Walnuts, and Orange Flower Honey

Recipe courtesy Jeremiah Tower, Jeremiah Tower Cooks, Stewart Tabori and Chang, 2002

This salad first appeared in Robin Leach's *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* (1986) cookbook and became an instant hit in my restaurants because the intense flavor of pears is concentrated by long and slow heating. Whenever a recipe calls for fruit to accompany meat, game or poultry (as in duck with pears), this is the best way I know to bring out the flavors of the fruit, giving a commercial product a new lease on life, as if it were ripe fruit fresh from a farm in Oregon or Long Island. The process is oven drying, slowly evaporating all that Colorado River irrigation water from the fruit without cooking it. Do the same thing with halved apples, peeled slice pineapple, quinces, plums, apricots (especially, since they tend to be the most ruined by growers), peaches and figs. If you can find Zante or Champagne grapes, they are the perfect garnish for this dish, but Concords would not be bad either. I also like to make this salad with ripe white peach and rose peppercorns sprinkled over the peaches and cheese.

4 ripe Comice pears  
1 tablespoon salt, plus pinch  
1 cup sugar  
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice  
Pinch freshly ground black pepper  
1/4 cup walnut oil  
1 bunch watercress, washed, spin dried, stemmed  
1 bunch rocket, washed, spin dried, stemmed  
1/4 cup fresh basil leaves  
1/4 pound Gorgonzola, rind removed, crumbled  
1/2 cup walnuts, toasted, coarsely chopped  
2 tablespoons orange flower honey  
1/2 cup edible flowers, such as sage, rocket blossoms, rose petals, or nasturtiums  
Champagne grapes, as needed for garnish

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F.

Slice the pears in half lengthwise. Rub each half with a pinch of salt. Put parchment paper on a tray just large enough to hold the pears, and spread the sugar on the paper. There should be a 1/8-inch layer. Put the pear halves cut side down on the sugar and bake for 1 hour. When the pears are cool enough to handle, remove the cores and slice them crosswise into 1/8-inch sections.

Put the lemon juice in a salad bowl with salt and pepper and mix to dissolve the salt, then whisk in the oil. Arrange the slices of pear 1 pear per plate, in 1 layer in the center of the plate, leaving a 3-inch gap in the center for the watercress and the rocket. Scatter the cheese and then the walnuts over the pears, and then drizzle the honey on top of the walnuts and cheese.

Put the watercress, rocket, and basil in the salad bowl and toss together. Then place the salad in the center of the pears.

Garnish with the flowers.