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Bites

Can't Stand the Heat? Get it Out of the Kitchen

How to make dinner without turning on the stove

by **Nina Lalli**
July 7th, 2005 6:14 PM

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When my gas was shut off last week, due to my landlord neglecting to pay the bill, I was furious. Then I realized it was mostly annoying in principle. It's too hot to turn on the stove, anyway. The truth is, I've been avoiding it for weeks. But although I've stopped cooking for the season, I still make dinner. It takes some effort to avoid the habit of ordering in—it's expensive and greasy. Plus, preparing dinner is relaxing therapy, as long as it doesn't take more than 20 minutes.



Keep it raw: Inspiration at the Farmer's Market
photo: Nina Lalli

When you get home at nine, coated in a combination of dirt and sweat, exhausted and starving, all you want to do is plant yourself on the couch and inhale cold nutrition while the air conditioner dries your forehead. Lettuce is often the foundation for this type of dinner, but it takes creativity to trick oneself into feeling satisfied by salad. Take a stroll through the **Farmer's Market** for inspiration and add texture with fennel, endive, radishes, cucumbers, and so on.

In colder months, I'm a meat and potatoes kind of girl, and while a light meal is appealing in the summer, I'm not one to pick at boring green leaves and call it dinner. The main challenge to cooking without cooking is the protein factor. But you don't have to sear a steak to get it. You can plop tuna or chicken salad (**Eli's Vinegar Factory** has the best) on top of greens and call it a day. Better yet, buy a jar of imported Italian tuna olive oil at a gourmet market or any Italian grocery store, like **Allegra** Little Italy. While you're there, pick up the makings of the ultimate room-temperature meal: cheese, assorted cured meats, and some good bread. You can cheat a little by buying roasted chicken and shredding it to eat

NYC Guide



Digging Clams: A Chowder Taste-Test

by Nina Lalli



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When my gas was shut off last week, due to my landlord neglecting to pay the bill, I was furious. Then I realized it was mostly annoying in principle. It's too hot to turn on the stove, anyway. The truth is, I've been avoiding it for weeks. But although I've stopped cooking for the season, I still make dinner. It takes some effort to avoid the habit of ordering in—it's expensive and greasy. Plus, preparing dinner is relaxing therapy, as long as it doesn't take more than 20 minutes.

When you get home at nine, coated in a combination of dirt and sweat, exhausted and starving, all you want to do is plant yourself on the couch and inhale cold nutrition while the air conditioner dries your forehead. Yes, lettuce is often the foundation for this type of dinner, but it takes creativity to trick oneself into feeling satisfied by salad. Take a stroll through the [Farmer's Market](#) for inspiration and add texture with fennel, endive, radishes, cucumbers, and so on.

In colder months, I'm a meat and potatoes kind of girl, and while a lighter meal is appealing in the summer, I'm not one to pick at boring green leaves and call it dinner. The main challenge to cooking without cooking is the protein factor. But you don't have to sear a steak to get it. You can plop tuna or chicken salad ([Eli's Vinegar Factory](#) has the best) on top of greens and call it a day. Better yet, buy a jar of imported Italian tuna in olive oil at a gourmet market or any Italian grocery store, like [Alleva](#) in Little Italy. While you're there, pick up the makings of the ultimate room temperature meal: cheese, assorted cured meats, and some good bread. You can cheat a little by buying roasted chicken and shredding it to add to a salad, or indulge without lifting a finger—[Whole Foods's](#) fish department will steam a lobster at no extra charge.

Some of the easiest solutions are vegetarian. Tofu is an obvious one, but it needs aggressive flavoring. As soon as you get home, put it in a bowl with something flavorful and acidic like salad dressing. Beans are more filling, though, and there's no shame in buying canned. Black beans with avocado, tomato, cilantro, and limejuice is almost a meal in itself. To get started on cook-free dining [Chad Sarno](#), the chef at the East Village vegetarian restaurant, [Counter](#), shared two of his recipes with us. Tell your landlord not to worry about those due dates.

SPRING CONSOMMÉ WITH AVOCADO, CHILE AND BABY DILL Serves 4-6

3 cups cucumber water (6 cucumber)
 2 cups vine ripen tomato water (8-9 tomatoes)
 2 teaspoons high quality sea salt
 1 cup coconut water (or filtered water)
 1 clove garlic
 1/4 teaspoon fresh chile diced

2 Tablespoon lemon juice
 2 Tablespoon flax oil
 1/2 teaspoon Cumin ground
 2 Tablespoon mint shredded fine
 2 Tablespoon dill feathers
 1/2 cup avocado diced (firm preferred)
 1/4 cup vine ripen tomato diced small
 1/4 cup tart apple, diced small

To release the natural water from the cucumber and tomatoes, place both in separate bowls. For the cucumbers, slice thin, sprinkle on one teaspoon salt and massage in until they begin to soften and release water. For the tomatoes, chop and do the same. Strain the liquid through a fine mesh strainer. Save this for the broth and store the 'pulp' for a future dish. In high-speed blender, blend the cucumber and tomato water with coconut water, garlic, chile, lemon, flax oil, and cumin. Pour again through a fine strainer to prevent foam. In a separate bowl, toss the avocado, apple, diced tomato and mint together, place a generous amount of mixture in each bowl, pour soup over and garnish with fresh dill. Serve chilled.

FRENCH LENTIL AND FAVA BEAN SALAD WITH SHAVED FENNEL Serves 4-6

1 1/2 cups cooked lentils
 1 cup cooked Fava beans
 1 fennel bulb, trimmed, cored, and thinly sliced
 1 tomato, seeded and diced
 1 jalapeno, minced
 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger or 1/4 teaspoon fresh
 2 Tablespoon fresh minced coriander
 3 Tablespoon fresh-minced parsley
 2 Tablespoon lemon juice
 1 Tablespoon lemon zest
 1 Tablespoon tamari
 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
 Crushed black pepper to taste

Toss beans together gently with all other ingredients, hands work best. Serve on a bed of butter lettuce. Excellent with a spicy fruit salsa.

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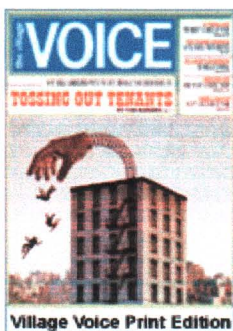
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FRENCH LENTIL AND FAVA BEAN SALAD WITH SHAVED FENNEL Serves 6



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