

Gurdjieff's Salad

1 large sweet onion, finely chopped
4 very red tomatoes, diced in half inch pieces
2 cucumbers, diced in half inch pieces (pickling or goutas with the smaller seeds)
3-4 pickled cucumbers diced small
¾ cup freshly squeezed grapefruit juice
1 cup pickle juice
¾ cup apple cider
¾ cup tomato juice
1 Tbsp tomato paste
3-4 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp white sugar
1 pint apple chutney, diced into ½" pieces
1 handful finely chopped parsley
1 handful finely chopped fresh dill
Salt, pepper, cayenne, paprika and curry powder to taste.
Tarragon

G. I. Gurdjieff was an Eastern Mystic from Kars (of Armenian and Greek parents) who brought his teaching to the West in the 1920's. Besides his spiritual work, he was a fine cook of Eastern food and more of the than not he prepared meals for his pupils. I have seen two other versions of his famous salad, one from the pupils of Frank Lloyd Wright, whose wife, Olgivanna, was a follower of the Gurdjieff teaching (Gurdjieff prepared the salad during a visit to Taliesin). The other recipe was from his niece, Luba Gurdjieff, who owned a Bistro in London. The two recipes are different from each other and from the one that was passed on to me by a student of Gurdjieff, which tells me that he was always creative about this wonderful dish and varied the salad according to the spices and vegetables that were available to him when and where he prepared it. The recipe that was given to me is my favorite and so I pass it on to you exactly as it was given to me. Try it this way. It is exotic and delicious. Later you can be creative about it in your own way.

This recipe will serve twelve to fifteen people depending on the size of the portions. Since this is such a special dish (and it is also time consuming to dice all the vegetables), you will want to prepare this for company. However it does keep well for three or four days after it marinates, and I love having leftovers as the flavors get a bit stronger each day.

As you dice the vegetables add each of them to a large mixing bowl and mix. Add the juices, the tomato paste, the mustard, the sugar and the chutney and mix again. Add the parsley, dill and the seasonings. It should be pleasantly hot and spicy. Cover and marinate in a cool place for two days before serving. Add a bit of tarragon before serving.

Luba Gurdjieff's Memories of the Gurdjieff Salad

Mr. Gurdjieff's Special Salad

This salad seems to be famous all on its own. We had something like it lots of times — not for big occasions, but when somebody was coming, somebody new to impress, you know, my Uncle would say in a big whisper, "That is my salad."

He used to come into the kitchen sometime and make it himself. He was tasting all the time. Valya and I and my auntie used to cut, cut, cut, and give to him. Anything he didn't like he used to throw it on the floor. Oh, I used to be so angry! You clean that kitchen and it's shiny and then — *bang* — on the floor!

Then he says, "That's enough cut. You good girl. Make a big bowl like that." By the time I used to be finished and put it all in the fridge it was starting to get fermented. And the bloody people there really still eat it. I used to say, "It's finished!" "No, no, no — it's all right for the American and English. They don't know how to eat."

One day at Coombe Springs it was Mr. Bennett's birthday and he said, "You think you can make me Mr. Gurdjieff's salad?" I said, "With pleasure. Just give me the money and the car. I go and fetch everything I need, and I make you salad. It's easy." I made it, but it took the whole day.

And you can't have a recipe for it. It costs the earth! You put anything you can find in that thing: chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes, celery, any vegetables you can find — only raw vegetables. No lettuce, because lettuce gets very soft. It used to have nuts in it; it used to have green olives you cut in pieces away from the stone; it used to have sometimes prunes in small pieces — it was like a dustbin. Chutney — he used to put lots of chutney. Sweet chutney that must be cut in small pieces, because chutney generally comes in nice big pieces. And he used to like those little green things in vinegar — capers. Twenty, thirty things used to go in that salad. Sometimes he would even put apples — any kind apples, I think he would put anything he could find in there.

There was always put in some tomato ketchup. I remember they used to bring it from England because we couldn't find any in Paris. And dressing he just put on a little bit vinegar and then some oil. You never do anything to it; just chew it. Oh, it's very easy to do.