

Salad of baby Arugula, aged Jack cheese and Asian pears - (6 servings)

8 - 10 cups very tender young arugula, lightly packed
1 medium fennel bulb
1 small bunch asparagus
2 medium Asian pears, chilled
2/3 cup coarsely grated or shaved dry Monterey Jack cheese
fruity green olive oil, or walnut oil
sherry vinegar
salt to taste

optional: truffle oil
optional: chopped, lightly toasted walnuts

Trim any long stems from the arugula, wash it and spin it in a salad spinner. If the leaves are tiny, leave them whole. If longer, take them in bunches and cut them in half. Trim the fennel bulb and quarter it lengthwise, cutting out the core, then slice it crosswise into paper-thin slivers. Trim the asparagus, and cut it on a radical slant into very thin slices. Quarter and core the Asian pears and cut them crosswise into thin slices. In an ample bowl, toss together the arugula, fennel, asparagus, sliced pears, and grated cheese. Drizzle on a small amount of olive or walnut oil and toss again. Add a bit of truffle oil if you have some, and a few drops of a good sherry vinegar. Toss again and taste. Add salt only if it is needed - the Parmesan cheese may provide enough. Adjust the amounts of oil and vinegar to your taste - the leaves should be shiny, but there should be no residue of oil in the bottom of the bowl - then toss the salad one more time, and serve. You can sprinkle chopped walnuts on top of each serving if you like.