

# Mediterranean Farro & Veg Salad - A Formula Meal

Catherine Brown, plant-based chef & culinary nutritionist at [A Seat at My Table](#)



This is another formula meal that I make often because leftovers make fantastic lunches for several days. Have you heard of formula meals yet? The basic concept is to work with a few whole ingredients - seasonal produce, proteins, healthy fats, herbs and spices that can be mixed and matched in any number of ways.

I've found planning meals this way to be ingenious because it:

- ~ saves time
  - ~ allows flexibility
  - ~ requires no recipe
  - ~ utilizes what you have on hand, and also
  - ~ encourages exploring unfamiliar ingredients
  - ~ boosts kitchen confidence
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- ~ fosters creativity
  - ~ reduces food waste
  - ~ packs in plenty of quality nutrients

This formula meal is the result of this process. I made this one earlier in the summer when local asparagus was still plentiful. If it's not available where you are, substitute green beans or summer squash. This is the beauty of using a formula (flexibility)!

Here's how it works. You choose:

- ~ what you enjoy eating
- ~ what's in season
- ~ what's available
- ~ what fits your budget

You choose a whole grain, some veggies (cooked, raw or a combination), additional protein, dressing, seasonings and/or herbs. The formula that works well is:

1 part cooked whole grain  
2 parts veggies  
1 part additional protein  
1/8 - 1/4 part dressing  
seasonings and/or herbs to taste

This allows you to make as much or as little as you need. You can prepare the components and store them in the refrigerator individually, or you combine everything together and then refrigerate.

Here are some ideas: Whole grains (cooked) and grain substitutes

- ~ barley, hulled - pearled barley has had the nutritious bran removed
- ~ buckwheat (kasha)
- ~ cracked wheat
- ~ farro (emmer wheat)
- ~ kamut
- ~ legume pastas: red lentil, black bean, edamame
- ~ millet
- ~ quinoa
- ~ oat groats (whole kernel, only husk removed)
- ~ rice: black, brown, burgundy or wild
- ~ rye groats (whole kernel, only husk removed)
- ~ spelt berries
- ~ teff (tiny grain, cooks like a porridge)
- ~ whole wheat berries, soft white
- ~ whole wheat bulgur
- ~ whole wheat couscous
- ~ whole wheat orzo
- ~ whole wheat small shell pasta

Veggies ~ (raw, pickled, fermented, steamed, roasted, grilled, lightly sautéed or a combination of any of these)

~ artichoke hearts

~ beets

~ baby bok choy

~ broccoli (broccolini or broccoli raab)

~ cabbage

~ carrots

~ cauliflower

~ corn

~ cucumbers

~ eggplant

~ fennel

~ kale or chard

~ kohlrabi

~ onions

~ parsnips

~ peas (shelling, sugar snap or snow)

~ peppers (sweet, hot, or both!)

~ radishes

~ spinach

~ summer squash

~ sweet potatoes

~ tomatoes

~ winter squash

Additional protein (yes, plants DO have protein!)

~ Beans: cannellini, kidney, garbanzo, navy, black, adzuki, edamame, yellow-eyed, Jacob's cattle, French green, brown or black lentils

~ Tofu: extra-firm, cubed

~ Tempeh: smoked or regular

~ Nuts and Seeds: (these also add healthy fats) sliced almonds, walnuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, filberts, Brazil nuts, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds (pepitas), sunflower seeds, peanuts (not a true nut, but a legume)

Dressing ~ I like to keep it simple and use a fresh vinaigrette. If you have some left-over vinaigrette, fantastic! Use it here, just keep in mind any herbs/spices already in the vinaigrette when adding additional fresh herbs. The basic vinaigrette ratio is 1 part vinegar to 3 parts extra virgin olive oil. Then season with a touch of salt and pepper. If you prefer LESS acid, use citrus juice instead of (or in addition to) vinegar. You can also add a touch of honey or maple syrup to balance the acidity.

This vinaigrette I made using the above ratio, plus 1 Tbsp preserved Meyer lemon paste, 1 Tbsp thyme-infused honey and 1 tsp dried Italian seasoning.

You may also wish to use one of my oil-free dressings.

~ Orange Ginger Dressing

~ Lemony Garlic Dressing

~ Creamy Lemon Basil Dressing

~ Almond Butter Lime Sauce

Seasonings ~

Seasonings can either be added directly to the vinaigrette or added to the dish separately. Use fresh herbs whenever available, just keep in mind you will need more fresh herbs than dried. You can also use dried ground spices. Think about what you enjoy eating (and smelling!) and don't be afraid to experiment... just start with a small amount, taste and adjust.

Here are some fresh herbs to consider:

~ basil (so many varieties available now!)

~ chives (have you tried garlic chives yet?!)

~ cilantro (or Chinese parsley)

~ dill

~ fennel fronds

~ lovage or celery leaves

~ mint (also many varieties)

~ oregano, Greek or Mexican

~ rosemary

~ sage

~ savory, summer or winter

~ scallions or bunching onions

~ tarragon, French (Russian is much less flavorful)

~ thyme (have you tried lemon or orange thyme yet?!)

~ edible flowers (nasturtium, pansy, borage, bachelor buttons, calendula, etc). For a great list of edible flowers and their flavor profiles, check out **THIS POST** (about 3/4 of the way down)!

Other ideas ~

~ avocado, diced - keep in mind it may oxidize quickly

~ fruit, dried: chopped dates, apricots, prunes, figs, pineapple, cranberries, raisins, cherries

~ fruit, fresh (or grilled!): apples, pears, peaches, pineapple, nectarines, plums

~ olives, any kind

The idea is to experiment and see what you like. Once combined, three to four days is usually the maximum time a formula meal like this will stay fresh. If you're preparing a meal for those with discerning palates, you can easily keep each part separate and serve "build-your-own" style. Any leftovers make excellent lunches!

**This one pictured contains the following:**

Farro

Grilled asparagus

English cucumber

Tomatoes

Bell peppers

Purple onion

Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)

Fresh basil

Fresh lemon thyme

Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

So if I want to end up with 4 servings (2 cups each), let's take a quick look at that formula again:

1 part cooked whole grain

2 parts veggies

1 part additional protein

1/8 - 1/4 part dressing

seasonings and/or herbs to taste

These are the quantities I'd use to make this one: [2 cups = 1 part]

2 cups cooked farro

1.5 cups asparagus

1/2 cup cucumber

1 cup tomatoes

1/2 cup bell peppers

1/2 cup red onion

4 cups total (the individual amounts can be anything you like)

2 cups garbanzo beans

6 - 8 Tbsp dressing

fresh and/or dried herbs to taste

Toss together and you're DONE! Easily scaled up or down.

## Nutrition Facts

Servings: 4

Amount per serving

**Calories** **525**

% Daily Value\*

**Total Fat** 11.4g **15%**

Saturated Fat 0.3g **2%**

**Cholesterol** 0mg **0%**

**Sodium** 402mg **17%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 86.1g **31%**

Dietary Fiber 18.4g **66%**

Total Sugars 12.8g

**Protein** 19.2g

Vitamin D 0mcg 0%

Calcium 98mg 8%

Iron 6mg 36%

Potassium 573mg 12%

*\*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a food serving contributes to a daily diet. [2,000 calorie a day](#) is used for general nutrition advice.*

Recipe analyzed by **verywell**

Nutrition information is for 2 cups using 8 Tbsp of vinaigrette.

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