

THE FIRST TIME I TASTED a raw kale salad, it was a revelation. Although kale puts on a “tough guy” veneer, it can be transformed into an enormously satisfying salad. Wash the leaves first—I use long, flat Tuscan kale here because they are less bulky and slightly more tender than curly kale—and dry them well to avoid diluting the dressing. Raw kale benefits from a little massage to tenderize its fibers. Whether you do this by rubbing the dressing into the leaves with your fingers (kind of fun) or by giving it an extra-thorough toss with tongs is your call. Raw kale also softens after spending some time with an acidic dressing, so don’t feel rushed to serve the salad immediately as you would with a soft-leaf lettuce salad.

Feta, a crumbly brine-cured cheese, adds the perfect combination of salty and creamy to this salad. It is made from sheep’s milk (or a combination of sheep’s and goat’s milk), which gives the cheese its notable tanginess. European Union legislation stipulates that only cheeses made in the traditional manner with sheep’s milk or a mixture of sheep’s and goat’s milk in specific areas of Greece may be labeled feta cheese, but similar brine-cured cheeses produced in France, Bulgaria, Denmark, and elsewhere can be substituted here. Indeed, any bright-flavored, salty cheese will shine in this salad. Try an aged goat cheese or grated pecorino (another sheep’s milk cheese), though the result will be less creamy.

Put the kale in a salad bowl. To make the dressing, in a small bowl, whisk together the mustard, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Add the oil and whisk to combine.

Drizzle the dressing over the kale, then, using your fingertips or tongs, toss together the kale and dressing. Spend a few minutes thoroughly working the dressing into the leaves. (At this point, you can cover and refrigerate the salad for up to 4 hours before serving.) Add the feta and toss once more. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt or black pepper if needed, then serve.

VARIATION For a dairy-free or vegan dish, add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup drained, cooked white beans or diced avocado in place of the feta.

Lemony Kale Shreds *with* Salty Cheese

SERVES 4

1 large bunch kale (12 to 14 ounces), center ribs and tough stems removed, leaves finely shredded

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Grated zest of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled feta cheese (about 2 ounces)