

# SUNFLOWER SALAD

SERVES 4

Ah, the element of surprise: Most people only know sunflower seeds as a health snack, or part of a trail mix, so when they see them in a salad, you've already won them over. I've been eating sunflower seeds in salads my whole life, because I grew up in a half-crunchy household: My (divorced) dad's girlfriend was an out-and-out health-food nut who belonged to a food co-op, shopped at the farmer's market, and tried every new tofu product in town. (Favorite memory: grinding our own organic peanut butter at the market, years before Whole Foods made it trendy to do so.) We were known to eat scrambled tofu, rather than eggs, for breakfast and bake carob-, rather than chocolate-, chip cookies. We even germinated our own sprouts. When microgreens became all the rage in the 1990s, I thought, "It's about time." I'd been eating delicate greens for decades, so I whipped up this salad featuring those dependable ol' sprouts and the ever-popular seeds. It's a light, simple salad punched up with the vibrant flavor of beets, salty Parmesan cheese, and the vinaigrette, which calls on three types of vinegar.

## Salt

2 large beets (about 12 ounces)

6 baby golden beets (about 6 ounces)

¼ cup shelled sunflower seeds

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper

2 heads Bibb lettuce, about 5 ounces each,  
separated into leaves

1½ cups packed sunflower sprouts, trimmed to  
1½ to 2 inches

2½ ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese,

1 ounce grated (¼ cup), remaining cut into  
shards with a vegetable peeler

Sunflower Vinaigrette [recipe follows]

Bring a medium or large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the beets and boil until tender to a knife-tip, approximately 12 minutes for the baby beets and 40 minutes for the large beets.

While the beets are boiling, heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sunflower seeds and toast until lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside.

When the beets are done, drain them, and when cool enough to handle, peel and quarter the baby beets. Transfer to a bowl and dress with the extra-virgin olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

Peel the large beets and slice them very thin crosswise, ideally on a mandoline. Arrange the beets in an overlapping pattern over the surface of 4 salad plates.

Tear the lettuce into bite-size pieces, gathering them in a large bowl. Add the sprouts and grated cheese, and season with salt and pepper. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the salad and gently toss. Divide among the beet-covered salad plates. Top with the seeds and a cheese shard. Arrange some baby beet wedges around each salad and serve.

recipe continues

**NOTE TO THE COOK** Be sure to use sunflower sprouts for this salad. They stay crisp and waxy and make the salad pleasantly fluffy. Other sprouts tend to collapse when tossed into a salad and to wilt when dressed with vinaigrette.

## *Sunflower Vinaigrette*

MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP

This is an all-purpose vinaigrette that you can use as an everyday house dressing. This recipe makes enough for roughly four portions; just multiply accordingly to make as much as you need.

1 shallot, finely diced	1 tablespoon sunflower oil
1 tablespoon rice vinegar	1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar	Salt
1 tablespoon champagne vinegar	Freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	

Whisk the shallot; rice, sherry, and champagne vinegars; sunflower oil; and sugar together in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

This dressing can be covered and refrigerated for 2 to 3 days.