

Cobb Salad

For the Salad

4 large eggs
2-4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
1 pound boneless NY strip steak, 1½-inches thick
1 head romaine
1 bunch watercress
1 pint grape tomatoes
2 Hass avocados
8 thick slices bacon
4 ounces blue cheese
4 tablespoons fresh chives
Vegetable oil for the broiling pan

For the Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
2 garlic cloves
¾ teaspoon sugar
5 tablespoons Sherry vinegar
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1¼ cups extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
2 teaspoons fresh thyme

For Prepping the Meats

In a large bowl, dissolve ¼ cup sugar and ¼ cup salt in 2 quarts of cold water. Submerge the chicken-breast halves in the brine, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 24, and as many as 48 hours.

Dry the steak with paper towels. Rub kosher salt on all sides of the steak. Place on a rack over a plate. Refrigerate for 24-48 hours.

For the Hard-Boiled Eggs

Have the eggs at room temperature. Fill a pot with water. Add some salt and some baking soda. Bring the water to a full boil. Lower the heat, and slowly submerge the eggs in the water. Bring the water back to a boil. Boil the eggs for 12 minutes. Run the pot of water under cold water for a moment, then remove the eggs. Roll the eggs back and forth on a counter top to crack the shells. When they are cool enough to handle, peel the eggs.

For the Vegetables

Wash and thoroughly dry the romaine leaves. Tear them into bite-sized pieces. Wash and dry the watercress. Cut off the tough bottom stems and discard them. Roughly chop the watercress leaves. Wash and dry the grape tomatoes, then slice them in half.

For the Bacon

If using chunk bacon, cut it into 8 thick slices. Place the slices in a cold skillet. Starting at a low heat, cook the bacon, turning it at least twice. Then raise the heat to medium, and continue cooking until the bacon is browned and crisp, again turning it several times. Drain the slices on paper towels. When they are cooled, crumble them into small pieces. Discard the oil in the pan, and set the pan aside.

For the Vinaigrette

In a bowl, whisk together the Dijon mustard, 3 tablespoons of Sherry vinegar, the fresh thyme, the Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, sugar, salt and pepper to taste.

Over medium heat, in the pan where you fried the bacon, add the 2 remaining tablespoons of Sherry vinegar. With a wooden spoon, stir and scrape the pan, deglazing it. Continue cooking until just a teaspoon or so remains, which should have become syrupy. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the syrup to cool. Whisk the syrup into the vinaigrette mixture until fully homogenized.

Press the garlic cloves through a garlic press. (If you don't have one, mince the garlic as fine as possible.) Whisk it into the vinaigrette mixture.

Drizzle the olive oil slowly into the mixture, whisking constantly until full homogenized.

Cooking the Meats

Remove the chicken breasts from the brine, dry them thoroughly on paper towels, lightly salt, and grind some pepper over them.

Adjust the rack to the upper part of the oven. Either brush a broiler pan with a bit of oil or use cooking spray. Brush the breasts lightly with the oil. Broil the breasts on one side until they develop some brown spots, about 5-10 minutes. Turn the breasts over, and broil them on the other side for several minutes. Cut into the thickest part of the breast to be sure there is no longer any pink (it should register 160° on an instant-read thermometer). Set the chicken breasts aside until ready to serve, then slice them ½-inch thick crosswise.

Heat a fry pan with 2 tablespoons vegetable oil until it just starts smoking. Dry the steak and add it to the pan, pressing down on it with a spatula. Fry for about 30 seconds, then flip it and fry the other side. Continue frying and flipping every 30 seconds for several minutes. Remove the steak to a board, and let it rest for 10 minutes. Slice it ½-inch thick crosswise when you are ready to serve.

Assembling the Salad

In a large mixing bowl, toss the romaine and the watercress with just enough dressing to thoroughly coat each leaf. Arrange the greens on a large, flat platter.

Place the chicken slices in the same bowl, and toss with enough dressing to coat. Arrange the slices in a row over the greens. Do the same with the steak slices, arranging them in another row.

Place the grape tomatoes in the same bowl, and toss with dressing. Scatter them on the platter. Cut the avocados in half, remove the pits, carefully scoop out the flesh in one whole piece, and rub it with a lemon slice to prevent coloring. Slice the avocados crosswise, toss them very gently in the bowls with the vinaigrette, and arrange them on the platter. Slice the hard-boiled eggs, and carefully drizzle vinaigrette over them. Arrange them attractively on the platter

Crumble the blue cheese and the bacon, and sprinkle them over the salad. Snip the chives evenly over the top, and serve the salad.