

How to Make Any Salad or Vegetable Taste Great: Creamy Date and Shallot Dressing + Toasty, Crispy, Nutty Topping

Part 1. Creamy Date and Shallot Dressing:

Yields 1.5 - 2 cups dressing

Ingredients

Fridge:

- 1 tablespoon dijon mustard

Pantry / Non Fridge:

- 2 ounces dried dates (I like deglet nour but medjool is good too), measured with pits removed
- 1 small shallot
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- ⅓ cup + 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Equipment

The Basics: cutting board, chef's knife, storage container, measuring spoons and cups

Specialty: blender

Instructions

1. **Prep the ingredients:**
 - Pit the dates if they came pit-in
 - Roughly chop the dates (should yield just under ½ cup when loosely packed)
 - Finely chop the shallot (should yield ¼ cup, you can save any extra for another dish)
2. **Complete the initial blend:** combine the dates (2 ounces, now pitted and roughly chopped), the shallot (~¼ cup, now finely chopped), the dijon (1 tablespoon), and the apple cider vinegar (½ cup) in a blender (a bullet blender works really well for this if you have one). Blend until well combined but still somewhat chunky
3. **Complete the second blend:** Add the olive oil (⅓ cup + one tablespoon), plus a big pinch of salt and a few cranks of pepper and blend until very smooth and emulsified. It will look like tahini! Taste and adjust seasonings as necessary
4. **Store:** This dressing will solidify in the fridge, but you can re-warm it by running warm water on the sides and shaking the container you stored it in!

Also, the dressing is relatively strong, so use sparingly at first and add more if that tastes right.



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Part 2. Toasty, Crispy, Nutty Topping:

Yields ~1 cup (1-3 servings)

Ingredients

Pantry / Non Fridge:

- ½ cup sliced almonds (a generous ½ cup)
- ½ cup panko (a generous ½ cup)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt
- 1 lemon
- Honey
- 1 clove garlic*
- Red pepper flakes*

Equipment

The Basics: small frying pan, rubber spatula / stirring tool, cutting board, chef's knife, storage container, measuring spoons and cups

Specialty: microplane

Instructions

1. **Prep the ingredients:**
 - Zest 1 teaspoon of the lemon (should be a packed 1 teaspoon)
 - *Optional:* Grate 1 garlic clove (although I only call for half a clove, you can add the other half if you like extra garlic!)
2. **Fry the almonds:** Add the olive oil (*2 tablespoons*) to a small frying pan over medium heat. Add the sliced almonds (*heavy ½ cup*) and cook until golden brown, stirring every so often with a rubber spatula (or whatever tool you want). This will take 5-8 minutes, depending on your stove. You will hear the nuts crackling and popping during the cooking process. That is totally normal!
3. **Add the panko:** Still over medium heat, add the panko (*heavy ½ cup*) and mix. Cook until golden brown, an additional 45 seconds - 1 minute
4. **Optional: Add the garlic:** Still over medium heat, add in the garlic (*½ clove, now grated*) and cook for just 45 seconds. Turn off the stove and remove the pan from the heat. Let cool for 5 minutes. Taste and feel free to add the other half of the clove if that's what your heart tells you!
5. **Season the topping:** You can season the topping in the same frying pan. Add in salt (*I normally do a generous 3 finger pinch*), lemon zest (*¾ teaspoon, or more depending on your preference*), and honey (*generous 1 teaspoon*). Because there are so many tiny bits, really thoroughly mix together at this stage. I normally taste and add another pinch of salt. You can really make this your own by adding red pepper flakes, fresh herbs, lemon juice, etc.
6. **Store:** Let the topping cool and then store in a room-temperature location. It will last 3-5 days, but you will likely eat it before then. Add however much you want on whatever dish you are serving it with. In the above picture I also included some grated parmesan

