

# Melon Salad with Thai Basil

| SERVES 6 TO 8

Santa Fe chef Peter Zimmer demonstrated a rather complex fall salad at the market one Saturday, at the heart of which was a variety of melons—Charentais, honeydew, Persians, cantaloupes—all finely diced and dressed with a salsa of Thai basil, cilantro, and mint. There were several more parts to his dish, but I loved the melon by itself. Here it's featured, cut larger, and set on pungent greens. Keep this in mind especially when you have several melons open at once.

1 large shallot, finely diced  
juice and zest of 2 limes  
sea salt and freshly ground pepper  
1 cup cilantro leaves  
⅓ cup Thai basil leaves  
¼ cup mint leaves  
1 jalapeño chile, finely diced  
1 teaspoon minced ginger  
1 small garlic clove, minced  
1 tablespoon nut oil or olive oil  
1½ to 2 pounds melon, chilled  
1 bunch arugula or watercress

1. Put the shallot in a bowl with the lime juice, zest, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Finely chop the herbs and add them to the bowl along with the chile, ginger, garlic, and oil. Stir and taste for salt.
2. Halve the melon, remove the seeds, and cut into wedges. Slice off the skins, then cut the melon diagonally into bite-sized pieces or into very small cubes, as you prefer.
3. Pour the dressing over the melon and toss well. Season with pepper. Arrange the greens on small plates and spoon the melon into the center. If the melons are extra-sweet, add an extra lime wedge to each plate. Garnish with the purple-tipped Thai basil leaves.

