

## FAT CONTENT AND COMPOSITION OF PREPARED SALADS

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Australian dietary goals include recommendations to decrease total fat consumption and to increase consumption of complex carbohydrates (Commonwealth Department of Health 1982). Salad fruits and vegetables have the potential to provide significant levels of complex carbohydrates while themselves containing low levels of fat. Commercial salad dressings and mayonnaises have been reported to contain moderate to high levels of fat (Makinson et al. 1983; Greenfield et al. 1983) and a study was therefore undertaken to assess the impact of dressing use on the fat content and composition of prepared salads.

Laboratory studies of potato salad prepared with popular Australian dressings indicated that the fat content of salads could be halved by the use of non-emulsified dressings (eg. prepared salad fat content: 1.9 g/100 g) compared to emulsified dressings (prepared salad fat content: 4.4 g/100 g) of the same fat content added at moderate levels. The fat content of dressings and the surface area per 100 g of fourteen different salad vegetables were found to be linearly related to the fat content of salads prepared from them. The mean fat and energy contents of fifty canned and fresh, ready-prepared, plant-based salads purchased in Sydney were, respectively, 3.5 g/100 g and 434 kJ/100 g and of two meat-based salads, 24.7 g/100 g and 1245 kJ/100 g respectively. The P/S ratio of prepared plant-based salads was 3.6/1 and therefore the intrinsically high P/S ratio of salad vegetables was not decreased as a result of dressing addition. Cholesterol was only present in those plant-based salads containing emulsified dressings, at a mean level of 5 mg/100 g, and 51 mg/100 g in meat-based salads.

The generally low total fat and energy contents of salads based on plant foods suggests that they are not major carriers of dietary fat and that the impact of dressings and mayonnaises on the total lipid profile of the diet may be minor. Recommendations to limit the consumption of dressings and mayonnaises therefore may not be useful in reducing fat intake. Further, the use of such products may assist in increasing consumption of complex carbohydrates, dietary fibre and vitamins since they serve to enhance the appeal of salad vegetables.

COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (1982). J. Food Nutr. 38 : 111.

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