

SALAD OF MESCLUN AND AVOCADO WITH BASIL-HONEY DRESSING

FOR THE DRESSING

- 1 cup basil leaves, packed
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 medium shallots
- ½ cup unfiltered apple cider
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- Salt and pepper

FOR THE SALAD

- 1 pound mesclun (about 8 cups)
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted, and cut into ½-inch cubes
- 2 dozen edible flowers, if available

MAKES 8 SERVINGS;
2½ CUPS DRESSING

Mesclun is delicious and pretty but perishable. Buy it at the peak of its freshness, and serve it right away. If you find edible flowers at your market such as pansies, marigolds, or nasturtiums, take some home for a garnish. And don't let the basil season pass you by. When it is plentiful, buy a big bunch, wash and dry the leaves and soft stems thoroughly, cram them into a glass jar, and fill the jar with olive oil. The leaves will lose their volume but none of their flavor or fragrance. Don't discard the gorgeous, emerald, basil-infused elixir: Dunk your bread in it, or use it in recipes calling for both olive oil and basil. It will keep a full two weeks in the refrigerator, although I doubt it will last that long!

To make the dressing: Combine the basil, oil, and shallots in a food processor and process until smooth. Add the cider, honey, vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste and process for 1 more minute. Store in a glass jar in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

To make the salad: Combine the salad ingredients in a bowl or on a platter. Add 1 cup of the dressing, or just enough to barely coat the greens, and toss. Serve immediately.