

FRESH FIG, GORGONZOLA AND WALNUT SALAD WITH WARM PORT VINAIGRETTE

1 1/2 cups walnuts, coarsely chopped
1 pound Arugula (about 4 bunches) or mesclun mix
16 fresh figs, halved lengthwise, or more to taste
1 cup Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled

FOR THE WARM PORT VINAIGRETTE:

1 cup ruby port wine
1 tablespoon sugar
1/4 cup aged balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup Colavita extra virgin olive oil
Fresh cracked black pepper (optional, to serve)

TO TOAST THE WALNUTS:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Spread the walnuts out on a baking pan and roast them until they are lightly browned, about 8 minutes. Coarsely chop them and transfer to a small bowl. Set aside.

TO MAKE THE SALAD:

Rinse, drain and spin-dry the Arugula leaves.

Place in equal mounds of Arugula on 8 small or 4 larger individual salad plates. Top with fig halves, crumbled cheese and walnuts, divided among plates. Set aside.

TO MAKE THE WARM PORT VINAIGRETTE:

In a small saucepan, reduce the port wine by half over medium-high heat, being careful to keep the heat low enough not to ignite the wine.

Add the sugar and stir to dissolve. Remove from the heat.

Add the balsamic vinegar and slowly whisk in the olive oil, emulsifying the vinaigrette. Allow to cool slightly.

TO SERVE:

While it is still warm, drizzle dressing over each salad. If desired, lightly season with fresh cracked black pepper.

Makes 8 large (lunch) or 4 small (appetizer) servings
Adapted from source: California Walnuts trade group