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Recipes from The Bacon Cookbook by James Villas. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ. Copyright 2007. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Chicken, Avocado, and Orange Salad with Bacon Dressing
(Makes 6 servings)

This is one of the most beguiling summer salads I know, all thanks to the way bacon and bacon grease do wonders to enhance the flavor of the main ingredients. If you like, the orange sections can be halved and tossed with the other ingredients instead of being used as a garnish, and for a more exotic salad, you might use tangy-sweet, red-fleshed, seedless clementines, if they're available. This bacon dressing contains no oil, so if you insist on a dressing with more body, whisk in a little extra-virgin olive oil or sunflower oil to taste.

6 slices streaky bacon
3 scallions (part of green tops included), minced
1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup water
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1-1/2 cups shredded escarole
1-1/2 cups shredded Boston lettuce
1-1/2 cups shredded arugula
4 cups cubed cooked chicken breasts
2 small ripe avocados, peeled, seeded, and cubed
2 large hard-boiled eggs, shelled and cut into large dice
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 oranges

In a large skillet, fry the bacon over moderate heat till crisp, drain on paper towels, and crumble. Pour 2 to 3 tablespoons of the bacon grease into a saucepan, add the scallions, and stir over moderate heat 1 minute. Add the vinegar, water, and mustard, whisk till the mustard is well incorporated, continue stirring about 3 minutes, and set the dressing aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the greens, chicken, avocados, eggs, lemon juice, and salt and pepper and toss well. Cut the oranges in half and remove the sections with a citrus knife, avoiding as much membrane as possible. Add the sections to the salad and toss again. Chill the salad for about 30 minutes.

When ready to serve, pour the dressing over the salad, sprinkle the crumbled bacon over the top, toss to blend thoroughly, and serve on wide salad plates.