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Little Ranch Dressing
Makes about 1/2 cup
Savory, Tangy, Rich, Creamy

Most commercial ranch dressings contain dried onion and garlic. I prefer fresh aromatics, but using them shortens the life of the dressing, hence the smaller yield in this version. This dressing is best used the day it is made, though you can store it overnight without the garlic developing an off flavor (any longer, and it will). If you prefer fresh dill, which is traditional, feel free to use it in place of the celery seed. I find it dominates the other flavors and prefer the milder taste of the celery seed.

1/4 cup cultured buttermilk
1 tablespoon mayonnaise, homemade or Best Foods/Hellmann's brand
1 tablespoon crème fraîche or sour cream
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons minced red onion
1 plump garlic clove, minced
Kosher salt
2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon sweet or hot Spanish paprika
1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
1 tablespoon minced fresh Italian parsley
1 tablespoon snipped fresh chives
Black pepper in a mill.

Put the buttermilk, mayonnaise, crème fraîche, and mustard in a small bowl or small wide-mouthed Mason jar. Stir with a fork or small whisk to blend thoroughly.

Put the onion and garlic in a small suribachi or mortar, season generously with salt, and use a wooden pestle to grand them to a paste. Pour in the lemon juice, swirl to loosen the paste, and add to the buttermilk mixture.

Stir in the paprika, celery seeds, parsley, and chives and season generously with black pepper. Taste, and correct for salt as needed. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes to let the flavors marry. Use immediately, or refrigerate, covered, for up to 2 days.

BEST USES:

Iceberg lettuce wedges; grilled cabbage wedges; cherry tomato salad; grilled zucchini; also Romaine lettuce; tomato and onion salad; as a dip with celery, carrots, radishes, chicken wings, and/or just about anything else you like; sandwiches.