

Xató is a typical Catalan dish. This a great dish to serve your guest. It is served as a first course in Catalonia but I have served it for supper too.

## Xato

Xato (pronounced cha-toh') is a Catalan dish traditionally eaten in January and February, the two coldest months, during which the Catalans find the sharp taste stimulating and warming, although they ordinarily use very little pepper in their food. It is during this season, too, that the heart of curly endive, which is the base of the dish, is whitest. Generally served as a first course in Catalonia, Xato is substantial enough to constitute a supper or lunch.

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## Xato Sauce

- 3 cloves garlic
- 7-8 peeled and toasted almonds
- 1 or more sharp chili peppers (or powdered cayenne pepper)
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup wine vinegar
- 3/4 tsp. salt

This sauce can be made in 5 minutes in an electric blender: simply put all the ingredients in at once and beat until the pepper is reduced to fine particles. If you do not have a blender, crush the garlic and almonds in a mortar, add one or more finely chopped chili peppers, and mash to a smooth paste before gradually blending in the oil and vinegar. The number of peppers (or the amount of cayenne) you use depends on how sharp you like the sauce. When tasting the seasoning, bear in mind that the sauce will seem less sharp when mixed with the salad.

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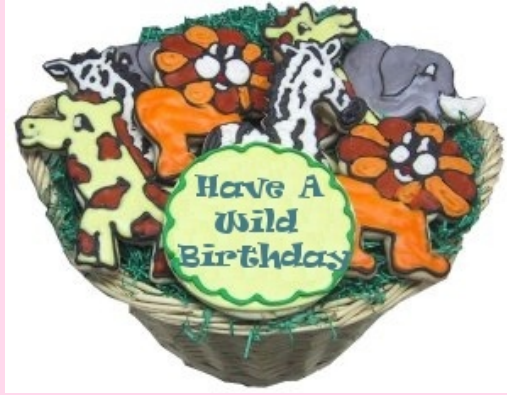
Don't you hate it when the garlic sticks to the knife as you mince or chop? Try sprinkling a garlic clove with just a dash of salt before mincing. The salt absorbs a little of the liquid, so won't be as sticky.

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