Warm Spinach & Pear Salad

TIP: Warming brings out the full flavor of the all the ingredients in this salad. The key to this recipe is heating the frying pan to the right cooking temperature, adding the fresh ingredients, stirring them with a spatula to warm them evenly, and then turning off the stove heat as soon as the spinach leaves show their first signs of wilting.

Preparation Time: 5-10 minutes, depending on number of ingredients

Cooking Time: about 5 minutes

Ingredients
(for 2)

2 Handfuls Fresh Spinach
1 Ripe Pear
2-3 Garlic Cloves
Olive or **Vegetable Oil**
Salad Dressing
Walnuts (I'm using raw walnuts, but you can substitute with any walnuts or your favorite nuts. Of course, **skip the nuts if you or anyone eating the salad has a nut allergy**.)
Feta (or your favorite) **Cheese**
Dried Cranberries (or any dried fruit)
Ground Black Pepper (optional)

Equipment

10-12 Inch Frying Pan
Spatula
Large Sharp (Chef's) Knife
Cutting Board
Colander

1. Put **2 handfuls of fresh spinach** in a colander and rinse it well under cold running water. (**Spinach** grows in sandy soil, and **spinach leaves** usually retain some of the gritty sand when harvested. I therefore recommend rinsing the **spinach** rigorously with cold water in a colander as shown below even if the **spinach** is packaged and the label says that the **spinach leaves** have been rinsed and are ready to use.)

2. Put a frying pan on the stove and warm it over MEDIUM heat.
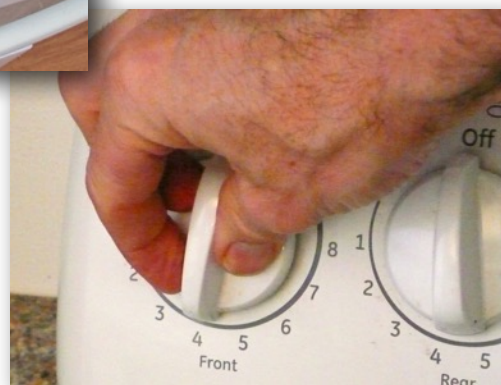
3. While the pan warms, prepare the **garlic** and **pear** as follows:

Garlic - Put **2-3 garlic cloves** on a cutting board, cover them one at a time with the side of a wide bladed (chef's) knife. Press on the top flat side of the knife with the heel of your hand until you hear and feel the **garlic skins** pop open.

broken garlic skin

Peel the **garlic skin**.

Hold the **garlic cloves** to the cutting board with curled fingers, and let the side of the knife rub against your knuckles while cutting the **garlic** into thin slices.

Finish by chopping the **garlic slices** in cross section into smaller pieces until they look about as shown below.

Pear - Rinse and give the **pear** a quick hand scrub under cool tap water.

Cut the **pear** in half lengthwise, and cut each **pear half** in half again.

Carefully remove the **core** from each **pear quarter**.

Cut each **pear quarter** lengthwise into 2-3 slices 1/2 - 3/4 inch (1.5 - 2 cm) wide, and cut those slices in cross section into bite sized pieces 1/2 - 3/4 inch (1.5 - 2 cm) wide.

4. Check the frying pan for proper cooking temperature by running tap water on your fingers and flicking the water onto the pan surface. The pan is properly warmed if the water sizzles when it hits the pan surface and quickly evaporates. (**NOTE:** If the water sizzles and evaporates in a puff as soon as it hits the pan, move the pan to a cool burner for a few minutes. Turn down the heat setting a few notches on the burner you originally used, and heat the pan again. If the water doesn't sizzle, keep heating the pan until it does.)

5. When the pan has been warmed properly, pour just enough **olive** or **vegetable oil** into the pan to coat the pan surface evenly, and right away,...

…add the **chopped pear** and **chopped garlic**,…

…a **handful of walnuts or your favorite nuts** (optional),…

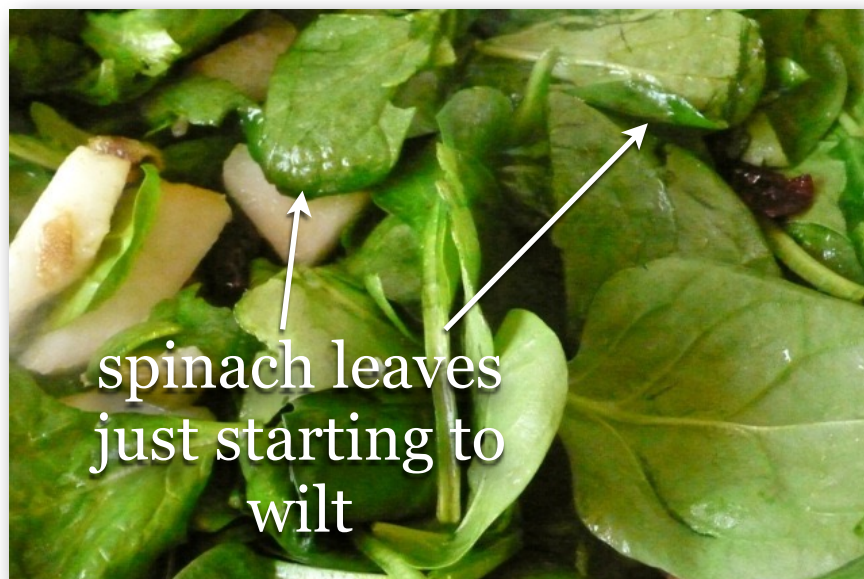...and a **handful of dried cranberries** (or any dried fruit).

6. Use a spatula to stir the **ingredients** in the pan, and cook only for 1-2 minutes until the **garlic** becomes fully fragrant.

Add the **spinach** and cook and stir with a spatula until the **spinach leaves** show their first signs of wilting...

...as shown here. Then...

spinach leaves just starting to wilt

...turn off the burner heat.

Add a **shot of salad dressing** and some **crumbled feta cheese**,...

...stir with a spatula,...

...serve warm, and...

...either enjoy the **warm spinach and pear salad** as is or add a **crunch of ground black pepper** to taste.