



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Cherry Junkyard Salad



Tips

- Drain pineapple well!
- Toasting the pecans adds more flavor but is not necessary.
- I think that the 8 ounce container of Cool Whip (I used extra creamy) holds up better than homemade whipped cream but you can use either.
- You can use fat-free/sugar-free ingredients to cut calories... but you do lose some flavor.
- Be sure to use sweetened condensed milk (like Eagle Brand) instead of evaporated milk.

Storage

Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to 4 days. You can also freeze this in an airtight container for up to 3 months.

It's delicious served partially frozen.

Variations

- You can use pretty much any canned fruit pie filling in this.
- Whole berry cranberry sauce is good, too. Perfect for the holidays.
- Use walnuts instead of pecans.
- Mom used to sprinkle toasted coconut on top sometimes.
- Pineapple chunks or tidbits can be used instead of the crushed pineapple.
- Some people like the colored miniature marshmallows instead of the the plain white ones.

FAQs

Why is it called junkyard salad?

Because somebody looked at the ingredient list, saw pie filling, marshmallows, pineapple, nuts, and whipped topping all in one bowl and said, “Well...this looks like a delicious mess.” Vintage recipes were not worried about branding.

Can I make junkyard salad ahead of time?

Yep! In fact, it tastes better after chilling for a few hours because the flavors have time to get acquainted. Make it the night before if you want to feel wildly organized.

How long does junkyard salad last in the refrigerator?

About 3 to 4 days if covered tightly. The marshmallows soften a little over time, but honestly? Some people think that makes it even better.

Can I freeze junkyard salad?

You can! Freeze it in an airtight container for up to 3 months. It’s surprisingly good partially frozen in hot weather, sort of like a fluffy cherry icebox treat.

Can I use homemade whipped cream instead of Cool Whip?

You can, but it won’t hold up as long. Cool Whip is sturdier for potlucks, cookouts, and situations where the dessert table has been sitting outside arguing with the heat.

What can I substitute for cherry pie filling?

Pretty much any canned pie filling works here. Strawberry, blueberry, peach, and even cranberry for the holidays all work beautifully.

Do I have to use pecans?

Nope. Walnuts work fine, or leave the nuts out completely if someone in your family thinks nuts are suspicious.

Can I use fresh pineapple?

Technically yes, but canned crushed pineapple works best because the texture is softer and more nostalgic. Drain it well unless you want pink soup.

Why is my junkyard salad runny?

Usually one of three culprits:

- the pineapple wasn’t drained enough
- the Cool Whip thawed too much before mixing
- homemade whipped cream lost the will to hold itself together

Can I make this into a holiday version?

Absolutely. Swap the cherry pie filling for cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving or Christmas and sprinkle toasted coconut or extra pecans on top. Suddenly she’s festive and wearing lipstick.

Is junkyard salad a side dish or a dessert?

Yes. 😊

Technically it’s a “salad,” spiritually it’s dessert, and at potlucks nobody is asking difficult questions.