

Cuban Tomato Cucumber Salad



Paul Jones and Jodie van Dieen, aka the Pelee Island Bird Brigade, won the Botham Cup in 2003, its second year. “The secret to our success,” writes Paul, “was the early discovery of a Henslow’s Sparrow, an endangered species. Once we photographed the bird, we were free to roam the island, racking up more sightings. For other teams, however, the Henslow’s presented a dilemma: search for this much-coveted addition to their Pelee Island all-time lists or boost their Botham Cup count with more common birds. Not only is this sparrow hard to see, it sings only at night (producing a barely audible hiccup sound) and behaves more like a mouse than a bird, skulking through long grass, reluctant to fly. Fortunately for us, the lure of the Henslow’s distracted the other teams long enough for us to win the day.”

Paul and Jodi first tasted this salad at Hotel Playa Giron at Cuba’s famous Bay of Pigs. “It propelled us forward to the Bermejas Reserve where we saw the rare, beautiful, and endemic Gray-fronted and Blue-headed Quail-Doves, as well as a Bee Hummingbird, the world’s smallest bird. The salad is quick to make, highly suitable for on-the-go Big Day birding meals, and given its ingredients, as appropriate to Leamington as it gets.”

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cucumber
- 1 large tomato
- White wine vinegar
- Water
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and Pepper

METHOD

Peel cucumber. Chop up cucumber and tomatoes and put in a bowl.

Pour a 50/50 mix of vinegar and water to almost cover the vegetables. Add a drizzle of oil and salt and pepper to taste.

Serve. Await compliments.

NOTE: This salad can be infinitely expanded and welcomes additions. Like many Latinx cultures, Cubans are fans of composed salads and often add thinly sliced red onion and radishes, arranged in concentric circles, dusted with parsley. For a marinated salad, refrigerate for an hour or two before serving, gently tossing every half hour. Keeps well for a few hours but not overnight.