

## **Dip And Drizzle With Ranch Dressing**

Ranch dressing is one of the most popular and best-selling condiments in the United States. Who would have guessed that buttermilk, mayonnaise, and herbs would evolve into such a staple of the American diet? Do you dip and drizzle ranch dressing on everything?

In 1954, Gayle and Steve Henson bought property near Santa Barbara, California, and renamed it Hidden Valley Ranch. They opened it as a guest ranch, and the place became even more popular as a steakhouse, with Steve's dressing. Over the years, Steve had been perfecting his signature salad dressing, a tangy blend of buttermilk, savory dried herbs, and spices, which he decided to name after the ranch – Hidden Valley. The recipe proved a hit.

First, they began to package his dressing and send it off with guests. After receiving an overwhelming response, they began packaging their dry ingredients in envelopes that could be quickly sold or mailed to customers. The customers would add their mayonnaise and buttermilk to the envelope of dry ingredients at their homes. The mail-order mixes proved successful and turned into a business all its own. Stores first sold the dry mix until shelf-stable bottles of the creamy dressing were introduced in 1983.

No two Ranches are identical. Every brand has its flavor profile with a blend of spices and consistency. Bottled ranch is fine, and I do not mind it at all. However, homemade dressing is always better for flavor and only takes a few minutes to make.

Since its creation, Hidden Valley Ranch has developed over 70 different varieties of ranch dressing. The most popular flavor remains The Original Ranch, followed by Avocado Ranch, Cucumber Ranch, and Bacon Ranch.

Though a tablespoon of the full-fat ranch can contain upwards of 150 calories, there are a myriad recipes for ranch without the health drawbacks. Many recipes substitute Greek yogurt or low-fat sour cream and say it tastes just as good as the classic with far fewer calories.

My favorite part about a homemade ranch dressing recipe is that it is easy to make. The tangy buttermilk is the dominant ingredient in this dressing and may not be a regular resident in your refrigerator, but it is always available in your grocery store. Use real cultured buttermilk instead of a combination of milk and vinegar to produce sour milk. All the other ingredients are most likely in your pantry or refrigerator.

Any home cook can make a full-flavored ranch dressing using fresh garlic, freshly ground black pepper, and fresh green herbs. For best taste, use a good quality full-fat mayonnaise and sour cream. It is okay to use low-fat buttermilk, and you may prefer it because the dressing will not become too thick. If available, use freeze-dried herbs. The process delivers more of the taste, aroma, and nutrition of fresh herbs compared to conventional drying. When freeze-dried herbs are rehydrated by contact with moisture, they reconstitute into a close approximation of their former fresh selves.

While sitting in the refrigerator, your homemade ranch dressing will thicken. Add more buttermilk and mix well if it gets too thick for your taste. Ranch dressing will stay fresh for up to 7 days when refrigerated.

With just a few simple ingredients, a bowl, and a whisk, you can create a creamy, standout ranch dressing or veggie dip. What are you waiting for? Dip and drizzle with ranch dressing!

### **Homemade Ranch Dressing**

#### **Ingredients:**

1/2 cup full-fat mayonnaise

1/2 cup low-fat buttermilk

1/4 cup full-fat sour cream

1/2 teaspoon dried parsley

1/2 teaspoon dried dill weed

1/2 teaspoon dried chives

1/2 teaspoon onion powder

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

#### **Instructions:**

Combine all ingredients into a bowl and stir together until well combined. For best results, let refrigerate for at least a few hours before using or serving.

If the dressing gets too thick, add additional milk or buttermilk until desired consistency.