- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Chill Time: 1 hour (minimum)
- Total Time: 1 hour 15 minutes
- Yield: 8-10 servings
- Category: Dessert, Side Dish
- Cuisine: American
- Skill Level: Easy

Table of Contents

- Why You'll Love This Recipe
- Ingredients
- Instructions
- Recipe Intensities
- Recipe Notes, Tips & Variations
- Nutrition Information

Why You’ll Love This Recipe

- Incredibly Easy: With just a few simple steps and no cooking required, this is a foolproof recipe anyone can master.
- Perfectly Balanced: The sweetness of the whipped topping and gelatin is perfectly offset by the tangy cottage cheese and the natural tartness of the fruit.
- Vibrant and Eye-Catching: The bright orange color makes it a beautiful addition to any table setting.
- Make-Ahead Friendly: It’s best when made ahead of time, freeing you up to focus on the rest of your meal.
- Nostalgic & Fun: It’s a taste of childhood for many and a fun, new experience for others.

Ingredients

- 1 (8-ounce) container frozen whipped topping (like Cool Whip), thawed
- 1 (3-ounce) box orange-flavored gelatin (like Jell-O)
- 1 (16-ounce) container small-curd cottage cheese

- 1 (15-ounce) can mandarin oranges, drained well
- 1 (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained well
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- Optional: ½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts for a bit of crunch

---

Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Base
In a large mixing bowl, combine the thawed whipped topping and the dry orange gelatin powder. Whisk them together until they are fully incorporated and the mixture is smooth and fluffy. It should be a uniform, light orange color.

Step 2: Add the Creamy Component
Gently fold in the cottage cheese. Using a spatula, carefully mix it until it’s evenly distributed. The cottage cheese adds a wonderful creaminess and a subtle tang that balances the sweetness.

Step 3: Incorporate the Fruit
Add the drained mandarin oranges and crushed pineapple to the bowl. Gently fold them in, being careful not to crush the delicate orange segments.

Step 4: Add the Texture
Finally, fold in the mini marshmallows and, if using, the chopped nuts. These ingredients add wonderful texture and make the salad more substantial.

Step 5: Chill and Serve
Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or preferably 2-4 hours. This allows all the flavors to meld together and the salad to set properly.

Recipe Intensities

- Difficulty: Low – This recipe involves no cooking and only requires simple mixing.
- Speed: Fast – The active preparation time is only about 15 minutes.
- Flavor Intensity: Moderate – The primary flavor is sweet orange, but it’s balanced by the creamy, tangy elements. It’s not overpowering.
- Texture Intensity: High – This recipe is all about the texture! You get fluffy, creamy, juicy, and chewy all in one bite.

Recipe Notes, Tips & Variations

- Drain Thoroughly: This is the most important tip! Make sure to drain the mandarin oranges and pineapple very well. Excess liquid will make the salad watery and dilute the flavors. You can even gently press the pineapple with a spatula to release more juice.

- Cottage Cheese: If you’re not a fan of the texture of cottage cheese, you can blend it until smooth before adding it to the recipe. This will give you a creamier texture without the curds.

- Chill is Key: Don’t skip the chilling time. It’s essential for the gelatin to hydrate, the flavors to combine, and the salad to reach its perfect, fluffy texture.

- Variations:

    - Tropical Fluff: Add ½ cup of shredded coconut and a handful of chopped macadamia nuts.

    - Cherry-Orange Fluff: Use a 3-ounce box of cherry gelatin for a different flavor and color, and add a cup of halved maraschino cherries (drained well).

    - Ambrosia Twist: Add ½ cup of sour cream to the whipped topping mixture for a tangier, richer flavor, and be sure to include the pecans.

Nutrition Information

Please note that the following nutrition information is an estimate and will vary based on the specific ingredients and brands you use. This information is for one serving of the recipe (based on 10 servings).

- Calories: ~265 kcal

- Total Fat: 10g
- Saturated Fat: 7g
- Cholesterol: 10mg
- Sodium: 180mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 38g
- Dietary Fiber: 0.5g
- Total Sugars: 32g (including added sugars)
- Protein: 7g