

VIETNAMESE SUMMER ROLLS

(The Steamy Kitchen Cookbook)

One 12-oz package rice paper wrappers
1 head soft, leafy green lettuce, leaves separated
1 cucumber, cut into matchsticks
2 carrots, cut into matchsticks
1 bell pepper, cut into matchsticks
1 big handful fresh mint
1 big handful fresh Thai basil or sweet Italian basil leaves
1 portion Cashew Nut Dipping Sauce or Peanut Dipping Sauce or Vietnamese Dip

Lemongrass Pork:

1 lb. pork
1 lemongrass stalk, outer leaves peeled until you reach pale yellow leaves, bottom 3 inches of stalk grated, or 1 tsp. lime zest
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
2 tsp. soy sauce
2 tsp. fish sauce
1 tsp. sugar

To prepare the Lemongrass Pork: Slice the pork as thin as you possibly can. To make it easier to slice, place the pork in the freezer for 15 minutes to firm up.

In a bowl, combine the sliced pork with the rest of the ingredients and marinate for 15 minutes at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator.

In the meantime, prepared the vegetables and herbs for the rolls.

Heat a wok or frying pan until very hot. Add the marinated pork slices in a single layer. You may have to do this in a couple of batches. Fry for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, depending on how thin you've sliced your meat.

Have the cooked Lemongrass Pork, rice paper wrappers, vegetables and herbs read on your work surface to roll, or arrange the ingredients on your dinner table and have everyone roll their own summer rolls.

To Assemble:

Fill a pie tin with warm (not hot!) water. Dip the edge of a rice paper in the water and quickly use both hands to turn the rice paper so that each side can dip in the water for 2 seconds.

Lay the still-stiff rice paper on a clean, dry surface. Fold the rice paper in half. The paper should be pliable and may still be a bit stiff. If the rice paper is floppy, soggy and too

slippery, try using cooler water or dipping the paper in the water for a shorter amount of time.

On the bottom half, lay your lettuce first to create a bed for the vegetables and juicy meat. Layer on your vegetables, meat and herbs. Do not overstuff! Each roll should have only 1 to 2 pieces of meat. If you are too greedy and put too much filling in the roll, they will be difficult to roll up!

Starting from the bottom, roll up. Tuck the ingredients in as you get that first turn to create a tighter roll. Don't suffocate the poor ingredients, but do make it nice and snug.

Continue rolling and you can make a slight tug back on the roll to make tighter. If your work surface is dry, tugging will be easy. Wipe your work surface dry before rolling your next roll.

Serves 6.

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