

FRESH SPRING ROLLS

GOI CUON

This is nothing more than a Vietnamese salad with pork and shrimp rolled up in rice papers. The aromatic herbs in these traditional rolls give an incredibly refreshing taste. They may be served with either Peanut Sauce or *Nuoc Cham* with Shredded Carrot and Daikon.



- Peanut Sauce* (page 211), or *Nuoc Cham with Shredded Carrot and Daikon* (page 212)
- 2 ounces *thin rice vermicelli* (bun, page 223), or $\frac{1}{2}$ bundle *Japanese alimentary paste noodles* (somen, page 223)
- 1 *tablespoon roasted peanuts* (page 220), ground
- 8 *raw medium shrimp*
- 12 *ounces fresh bacon* (pork belly) or *boneless pork loin, in one piece*
- 1 *large carrot, shredded*
- 1 *teaspoon sugar*
- 8 *rounds of rice paper* (banh trang), each $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter
- 4 *large red leaf or Boston lettuce leaves, thick stem ends removed and cut in half*
- 1 *cup fresh bean sprouts*
- $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup mint leaves*
- 16 *sprigs Chinese chives, trimmed to 5-inch lengths* (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ *cup coriander leaves*

cilantro

Prepare the dipping sauce, noodles and roasted peanuts. Set aside.

Boil the shrimp for 3 minutes; refresh under cold water. Shell, devein and cut lengthwise in half. Set aside.

Cook the fresh bacon in boiling salted water for 20 minutes; refresh in cold water. Thinly slice into 1 by 2-inch pieces.

In a bowl, combine the shredded carrot with the sugar; let stand for 10 minutes to soften.

Have a basin of warm water ready to moisten the rice papers.

Work with only 2 sheets of rice paper at a time, keeping the remaining sheets covered with a barely damp cloth to prevent curling. Immerse each sheet individually into the warm water. Quickly remove and spread out flat on a dry towel, without letting the sheets touch one another. The rice paper will become pliable within seconds.

Lay one piece of lettuce over the bottom third of the rice paper. On the lettuce, place 1 tablespoon of noodles, 1 tablespoon of the shredded carrot, a few pieces of pork, bean sprouts and several mint leaves. Roll up the paper halfway into a cylinder. Fold both sides of the paper over the filling. Lay 2 shrimp halves, cut side down, along the crease. Tuck 2 chive sprigs under the shrimp at one end, leaving about 1 inch of the chives extending over the fold line. Place several coriander leaves next to the shrimp row. Keep rolling the paper into a cylinder to seal. Place the rolls on a plate covered with a damp towel so they will stay moist as you fill the remaining wrappers.

Pour the dipping sauce into small individual bowls and sprinkle with the ground nuts. Dip the rolls in the sauce as you eat.

NOTE These rolls can be prepared a few hours in advance, covered with a damp towel or plastic wrap and kept at room temperature until needed.

Yield: 8 rolls, or 4 servings

PEANUT SAUCE

NUOC LEO

This delicious sauce originated in the central region and is used as a dip for many dishes in this book. Usually, *tuong*, a fermented soybean sauce, and glutinous rice are used to produce this sauce.

After several experiments, I ended up with this variation where *tuong* and glutinous rice are replaced by hoisin sauce and peanut butter, ingredients that are more readily available.



1/4 cup roasted peanuts (page 220), ground

1 tablespoon peanut oil

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 teaspoon chili paste (tuong ot tuoi)

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1/2 cup chicken broth or water

1/2 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon peanut butter

1/4 cup hoisin sauce

1 fresh red chile pepper, seeded and thinly sliced

Prepare the roasted peanuts. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a small saucepan. When the oil is hot, add the garlic, chili paste and tomato paste. Fry until the garlic is golden brown, about 30 seconds. Add the broth, sugar, peanut butter and hoisin sauce and whisk to dissolve the peanut butter. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 3 minutes.

Divide the sauce among individual dipping bowls and garnish with the ground peanuts and sliced chile. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Yield: About 1 cup

QUICK PEANUT SAUCE

This is my "lazy" version of Nuoc Leo sauce.



1/4 cup hoisin sauce

1/4 cup chicken broth or water

1 tablespoon nuoc mam (Vietnamese fish sauce) or soy sauce

2 tablespoons store-bought dry-roasted unsalted peanuts, ground

1 fresh red chile pepper, seeded and thinly sliced

Combine the hoisin sauce, chicken broth and fish sauce in a small bowl. Stir well to blend.

Divide the sauce among individual dipping bowls. Garnish with the ground peanuts and sliced chile.

NOTE When serving this sauce with Buddhist vegetarian dishes, use water and soy sauce instead of broth and fish sauce.

Yield: 2/3 cup