

Vietnamese fresh spring rolls with rainbow vegetables and tofu

This colorful appetizer is bursting with flavor and nutrition.



Contributed by [Linda Shiue, MD](#)

Fresh spring rolls are the perfect spring and summer food: they're served cold (not fried) and filled with fresh crunchy vegetables, making them healthy and wonderfully refreshing. They're also ideal for a picnic and make great finger food for entertaining. Rolling them takes a little bit of practice, so you may want to keep a few extra sheets of rice paper handy just in case your rolls tear in your first few attempts. I would recommend enjoying these immediately, leaving no leftovers; the rice paper tends to harden when refrigerated. It's highly unlikely there will be leftovers anyway! I've also included recipes for two dipping sauces: a spicy peanut sauce and "nuoc cham" (pronounced "nook chum"), a tangy and sweet fish sauce-based Vietnamese dipping sauce.

Servings: 10

Prep time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

1 pound firm tofu

1 to 2 tablespoons canola or peanut oil

5 cups cooked Vietnamese rice vermicelli, cooled (about 2 to 3 uncooked

bundles)

10 12-inch round sheets rice paper

10 leaves red leaf lettuce, leaves washed, dried, separated and trimmed to fit within the diameter of the rice paper

1 small bunch mint

1 large red bell pepper, julienned

2 carrots, julienned

1 English or 2 Persian cucumbers, julienned

1 cup red cabbage, julienned

Optional: Nuoc Cham (Vietnamese dipping sauce)* and/or Spicy peanut dipping sauce**

***Nuoc Cham (Vietnamese dipping sauce)**

6 tablespoons fresh lime juice

3 tablespoons Asian fish sauce

2 tablespoon sugar

1/2 cup warm water

1 garlic clove, finely minced

2 small thin fresh red or green Asian chilies (1 to 2 inches long) or 1 serrano chile, seeded and chopped fine

Directions: Stir together all ingredients in a bowl until sugar is dissolved.

****Spicy peanut dipping sauce (vegan)**

4 tablespoons creamy natural peanut butter (only peanuts)

Juice of two limes

2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce

2 teaspoons sugar

2 to 4 tablespoons water, to thin out the sauce, if necessary

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon chile-garlic sauce, or red pepper flakes (adjust to taste)

Directions: Stir together all ingredients in a bowl until well combined.

Directions

1. Drain tofu, wrap in paper towels, and press for 30 minutes by sandwiching between 2 cutting boards topped with a heavy object, like a pan.

2. Cut pressed tofu into 1/4 inch thick 1 inch by 1/2 inch rectangles.
3. Meanwhile, make the dipping sauces (recipes above) and set them aside.
4. Once the tofu has been pressed, dry well with a paper towel. Warm oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add tofu rectangles in a single layer. Fry until golden brown, about 3 minutes on each side. Remove from pan and set aside.
5. Set up your workstation for making the rolls: set out all of the vegetables, cooked and cooled noodles, and cooked sliced tofu. Set aside a large bowl with warm water.
6. To assemble, dip one sheet of rice paper into the water and quickly rotate to moisten the entire sheet, just a few seconds. It will appear hard but becomes pliable, so it will continue to absorb the water as it lays flat. Lay the wet rice paper on a flat work surface such as a cutting board or large plate. Arrange one lettuce leaf over the bottom third of the rice paper, running your finger along the rib to crack and flatten it. Top with three mint leaves and a thin layer (about 1/4 cup) of rice noodles. Add a few slices of tofu and a handful of assorted julienned vegetables. Avoid the temptation to overstuff! Fold in the left and right sides of the rice paper, then fold the bottom edge up and over the filling tightly and roll toward the top end, enclosing the filling completely and as tightly as you can.
7. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. To serve, cut each roll crosswise into halves or thirds, and serve with dipping sauces.

Nutrition information (per serving)

Serving size: 1 roll

Calories: 179

Total fat: 2 g

Sodium: 67 mg

Total sugars: 2 g

Protein: 7 g

Nuoc Cham (per tablespoon):

Calories: 17

Carbs: 4 g

Fat: 0 g

Protein: 1 g

Sodium: 285 mg

Sugar: 1 g

Spicy peanut dipping sauce (per tablespoon):

Calories: 19

Fat: 1 g

Protein: 1 g

Sodium: 60 mg

Sugar: 1 g