



Lobster, Mango and Jicama Summer Rolls with *Nuoc Cham Nem* Dipping sauce

This adaptation of the classic Vietnamese Summer Roll focuses on the subtle juxtaposition of tender lobster meat with the sweetness of mango and the light crunchy texture of raw jicama. The added color contrast of the fresh herbs and carrots brings the dish together into a colorful medley. We can't resist making a platter of these rolls anytime we have guests, or as an excuse to invite people over!

4 servings of two rolls each

Ingredients

2 ounces cellophane noodles, softened
8 leafy lettuce leaves, washed and trimmed
2 carrots, julienned
1 ripe mango, peeled and julienned
¼ pound jicama root, skinned and julienned
1 pound lobster tail meat, cooked and chilled
3 tablespoons cilantro, hand torn
3 tablespoons thai basil leaves, hand torn (you may substitute Genovese Basil)
2 teaspoons dark sesame oil
1 lime, juiced
8 rice sheets, *banh trang*
20 fresh mint leaves, plus sprigs for garnish

For the nuoc cham nem sauce:

¼ cup rice wine vinegar
2 tablespoons fish sauce
¼ cup water, hot
2 tablespoons sugar
1 lime, juiced
1 teaspoon garlic, minced
1 teaspoon *sambal oelek* chile paste
1 medium carrot, finely shredded

Preparation

Put the cellophane noodles in a bowl of hot water to soften for about 10-15 minutes. Meanwhile, julienne all the vegetables into equal sized matchsticks, no more than 2 ½ inches long. After the noodles have softened, drain well in a colander and toss with a little of the sesame oil and a squeeze of lime juice.

Cut the cooked and chilled lobster tail meat into strips, being careful to keep them intact. You can likely get 3 strips of lobster per tail, depending on the size.

Pour 3 cups of hot - not boiling - water in a large shallow bowl. One at a time, immerse the rice paper wrappers in the hot water for 10 seconds to soften, then place on a slightly damp towel. The rice paper is very delicate, so don't soak them any longer or they will break apart. Keep them covered while you work to prevent them from drying out and curling.

*[Chef's Note: For beginners, working with the *banh trang* can be quite daunting. One way to learn how to use them is to simply dip them one at a time into the hot water for 3-4 seconds, and lay them down on your work surface. After a few minutes, the wrapper will soften enough to use and you won't have to deal with pulling them apart from each other or evening them out if they've gotten wrinkled.]*

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To form the rolls, lay a rice paper wrapper on a flat working surface. Lay one trimmed lettuce leaf on the lower third of the wrapper, leaving at least an inch of wrapper on each side. Top it with a small handful of seasoned cellophane noodles, followed by two or three strips of each of the julienned carrots, mangoes and jicama. Use less filling than you think you should - if you overstuff the wrapper it will tear. Carefully fold the bottom of the wrapper up to cover the filling. Fold in the left and right sides, then tuck and roll it over once, pulling towards you like a cigar or burrito.

Lay one strip of lobster meat down near the top, with the pink striations facing down so they will show through the final product. Be sure to leave at least ½ inch of wrapper at the top. Lay 2 mint leaves on top of the lobster and add basil leaves and cilantro to taste, then tuck and roll it over to close the whole thing up like a tight cigar. The lobster should show through the transparent rice paper. Arrange the finished rolls on a platter with the seam side down so that they close up and “glue” themselves together, and cover with a damp towel until service.

[Chef's Note: The rolls should be made as close to service as possible, as they will dry out, even when covered with a damp towel.]

For the dipping sauce:

In a blender, purée the rice wine vinegar, fish sauce, hot water, sugar, lime juice, garlic and chile paste until combined. Pour into a small bowl and add the grated carrots.

Service

To serve, cut rolls into bite-sized pieces on the bias and arrange nicely on a serving platter, or stand up in individual bowls or plates. Garnish with mint and basil sprigs. Serve with the *nuoc cham nem* dipping sauce.

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