



Fresh Spring Rolls

As Panee Muncharoen and Rattana Sherman from Thailand, Quang Nguyen from Vietnam, and Makara Meng from Cambodia, taught Lindsay Sterling in Maine. Photo by [T.Tseng](#) through Wikimedia Commons.

Notes: For variety you can change the protein in these - my cooking teachers have used tiny shrimp, large shrimp (sliced across the middle in order to halve the thickness of the shrimp), slices of cooked pork chop, and wedges of hardboiled egg. Dipping sauces vary as well - two favorites are featured here. Thai basil is a different variety of basil than what's typically in supermarkets in the U.S. Thai basil has a purple stem, a distinct flavor (fabulous!), and heartier leaves. It is worth the trip to an Asian market to get this and other ingredients.

Cooking time: 1-2 hours, depending on how good you get

Makes: 20 spring rolls

Ingredients

For the Rolls:

- 1/2 head lettuce: iceberg cut into 1/4 inch strips or another variety of your choice
- small bunch fresh cilantro leaves
- small bunch fresh mint, leaves picked from the stems
- small bunch Thai basil, leaves picked from the stems
- 3 oz. thin rice noodles (Rattana likes Wai Wai brand)
- package rice paper spring roll wrappers (Rattana likes Banh Trang 22cm)
- optional protein: shrimp, hardboiled egg, slice of cooked pork

For the Sweet Chili Dipping Sauce (not pictured):

- 1/4 cup sweet chili sauce (Rattana likes Mae Ploy brand "for chicken")
- 1/8 cup water
- 1/8 cup distilled vinegar (Rattana likes Golden Mountain brand)
- 2 tsp unsalted peanuts, ground in coffee grinder or chopped
- 5 cilantro leaves

For the Chili-Garlic Dipping Sauce (not pictured):



- 3 Tbsp sugar
- 4 garlic cloves
- 2 red Thai chilis
- juice of 4 limes
- 1/4 cup water
- 4 Tbsp fish sauce
- 1 shallot, finely minced

Equipment

- mortar and pestle (for the chili-lime sauce)
- large saute pan
- trivet (or work surface that can stand a hot pan)
- clean counter for a work surface
- serving platter
- small bowls for dipping sauce for each person - people will want to double dip!

Instructions

1. Put rice noodles into boiling water for two minutes. Drain and let cool. Gather all your roll ingredients into separate dishes or piles at the counter where you will assemble the spring rolls. Also have the platter for serving the finished spring rolls nearby.
2. Heat 2 inches of water in a large saute pan until steaming; turn off heat. Put the pan on a trivet near where all the spring roll fixins' are.
3. Put one piece of rice paper in hot water until it softens like a jellyfish (5 seconds). Use a spatula to remove it, or your fingers if you're tough. Spread rice paper out directly onto counter.
4. Place an oblong mound of iceberg lettuce just below the center of the wrapper. Put half as much rice noodles on top of lettuce, and 2-3 leaves of Thai basil and whole cilantro leaves. Break apart mint leaf into pieces and sprinkle on top. About half way up the wrapper, make a row out of your protein item (shrimp, chicken, egg, or pork) keeping the edges of the wrapper free of filling items by a couple inches on each side.
5. Pull the bottom of the rice paper tightly over the mound of fillings, and roll up. When you have rolled about two-thirds of the circle, fold the edges into the center like you would close the ends of a burrito, and complete rolling.



6. Put the finished roll on the serving platter, wipe your work surface dry (if it's wet, the wrapper tends to not stick as well to itself when rolling), and continue making more rolls. If the rice paper stops softening, you need to reheat the saute pan of water.

7. Make the dipping sauce of your choice. For the chili-lime sauce, start with the sugar in the mortar and pestle. Mash the garlic into the sugar into a paste. If your mortar and pestle is small, transfer its contents into a larger bowl and then mix in the liquids. Finely sliced rounds of the Thai chilis and add to the sauce. Wash your hands - the spicy oils are on them and will hurt if they get on or near your eyes. Add minced shallots. Ideally guests each have their own for sauce so they can double dip.