

Huong's Vietnamese Spring Rolls (Chả Giò)

Courtesy Kim O'Connell

Filling:

- 2 or 3 tablespoons pure fish sauce
- 1 egg
- 1 pound ground pork or chicken
- 1 pound peeled and deveined shrimp, chopped finely
- 1 cup of dried wood ear or shiitake mushrooms, reconstituted if dried and finely chopped
- Large handful of glass (cellophane) noodles, soaked in hot water until soft, drained, cut into 1- to 2-inch lengths
- 1 yellow onion, peeled and minced
- 3 or 4 scallions, finely chopped (to taste)
- 1 or 2 cups of carrot, peeled and grated (about 1 to 3 large carrots)
- 1 jicama, peeled and grated
- 1 to 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar (to taste)
- Salt and pepper to taste (don't skimp on this step!)

For wrapping and frying the rolls:

- 25 frozen spring roll wrappers, thawed (these are the square wrappers that contain wheat, not the traditional crosshatched round rice-paper wrappers)
- 1 egg, for brushing
- Vegetable oil for deep frying

For the dipping sauce (nước chấm):

- About 6 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1/3 cup fresh lime juice (2 or 3 limes)
- 3 tablespoons sugar (or so)
- 2/3 cup water
- 2-3 red peppers, chopped (to taste)

Instructions

1. Sauté onion and jicama until tender.
2. In a large bowl or pot, combine all the filling ingredients. Set aside.
3. Place one wrapper on a clean surface so that a corner faces you and it resembles a diamond. Put about two heaping tablespoons of the filling on the lower third of the wrapper, shaping it until it's about a four-inch log. Fold in the sides, then the bottom, and roll up tightly. Brush a bit of egg on the final corner to seal up the edge. Put the roll on a platter, seam side down, and continue until all wrappers are used. Don't let the rolls touch as they might rip when pulled apart.
4. Heat one to two inches of oil in a large, deep frying pan or pot over medium-high heat to 350°F. Fry rolls in batches, adding as many as can fit comfortably, until golden brown. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels.
5. For the sauce, combine all ingredients except for peppers in a small bowl and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add peppers to taste.
6. Serve with lettuce leaves for wrapping (which makes it possible to pick up the hot rolls), as well as sliced cucumbers, basil leaves, or pickled vegetables to add to the wraps as you wish.