

SPRING ROLLS

When I released my first cookbook in 2012, I noted that the Slanted Door sells about 80,000 spring rolls a year, most of which are rolled by Mrs. Tran. Thankfully, Mrs. Tran is still here, rolling as quickly and efficiently as ever. These spring rolls are responsible for the genesis of the entire Slanted Door family of restaurants. If my mother hadn't come up with this recipe, I'm not sure I would have had the inspiration—or the confidence—to strike out on my own with a restaurant.

15 medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
8 ounces boneless pork shoulder
1 egg yolk
½ cup shallot oil (page 249) or canola oil
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
5 cups cooked rice vermicelli (page 250)
Ten 12-inch round sheets of rice paper
1 head red leaf lettuce, leaves separated, washed, and dried
30 mint leaves
1¼ cup peanut sauce (page 250), for dipping

Makes 10 rolls; serves 10

1. Fill a pot with water and bring to a boil. Add the shrimp and blanch until the shrimp have turned bright pink, about 3 minutes. Using a slotted spoon or a spider, transfer the shrimp to a colander and rinse under cold running water. Drain the shrimp on paper towels and cut each shrimp in half lengthwise. Set aside.
2. Return the water to a boil and add the pork. Turn the heat down to low and simmer until the pork is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Check for doneness by removing the pork from the water and poking it with a chopstick; the juices should run clear. Let cool completely, then cut against the grain into slices ¼ inch thick.
3. To make the mayonnaise, put the egg yolk in a large mixing bowl and whisk well. Pour the shallot oil into a measuring cup with a spout and begin adding the oil to the egg yolk a few drops at a time, whisking constantly until the mixture thickens and emulsifies. Continue to add the oil in a slow and steady stream, whisking constantly, until all the oil is incorporated. The mixture will be very thick. Whisk in the salt and set aside.
4. Fill a large bowl with very hot water. Dip one sheet of rice paper halfway into the water and quickly rotate to moisten the entire sheet. Lay the wet rice paper on a flat work surface. Arrange one lettuce leaf over the bottom third of the rice paper, flattening the lettuce to crack the rib. Spread a generous teaspoon of the mayo over the lettuce, then top with three mint leaves placed end to end and a few slices of pork. Top with about ½ cup of the noodles.
5. 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 one full turn, enclosing the filling completely. Place three pieces of shrimp, cut side up and end to end, in a row on the rice paper, then roll another turn to enclose the shrimp. Continue rolling as tightly as possible toward the top edge, tucking in the sides, until you have a tight cylinder. Repeat with the remaining rice paper and ingredients.
6. The rolls can be made up to two hours in advance. Cover with a damp towel until serving. Just before serving, cut each roll crosswise into thirds. Serve with peanut sauce.

FLAVORED SOY SAUCE

½ cup light soy sauce
¾ cup sugar
3 tablespoons distilled white vinegar
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 or 2 Thai chiles, stemmed and minced

Makes about 1½ cups

In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce, sugar, and vinegar, and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the garlic and chile and stir until well combined. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 week.

FLAVORED FISH SAUCE

½ cup fish sauce
⅓ cup sugar
¼ cup distilled white vinegar
½ cup water
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 or 2 Thai chiles, stemmed and minced

Makes about 1½ cups

In a small bowl, combine the fish sauce, sugar, vinegar, and water, and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the garlic and chile and stir until combined. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 week.

SHALLOT OIL AND FRIED SHALLOTS

2 cups thinly sliced shallots
2 cups canola oil

Makes about 2 cups oil and 1 cup fried shallots

1. In a small saucepan, heat the oil over medium high heat until it reads 275°F on a candy thermometer. Add the shallots and fry until light golden brown, about 8 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to remove the shallots from the oil and let drain on a paper towel-lined baking sheet.
2. Return the oil to high heat until it reads 375°F on the candy thermometer. Add the fried shallots and fry for 1 to 2 seconds, until brown. Turn off the heat. Immediately remove the twice-fried shallots onto a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Let drain and cool. The fried shallots can keep in an airtight container for 1 to 2 days.
3. Strain the shallot oil into a heatproof container. Use immediately or keep in a covered container for up to 2 days or refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

FRIED TOFU

2 cups canola oil
6 ounces medium-firm tofu, patted dry,
cut into 3 by 3-inch squares, ¼-inch thick

Makes about 1 cup

In a 7- or 8-inch wide high-sided pot, heat the oil over high heat until it reaches 350°F on a candy thermometer. Carefully add the tofu squares, working in batches if necessary. Turn once or twice and fry until golden brown. Using a slotted spoon, remove the tofu and place on a paper towel-lined tray. Let drain and cool. Cut into ¼-inch-wide strips. Serve immediately.

RICE VERMICELLI

2½ quarts water
1 pound dried rice vermicelli

Makes about 3 cups

In a 10- to 12-inch pot, bring the water to a boil at high heat. Add the rice noodles and cook for about 3 to 4 minutes. Drain the noodles in a colander and rinse under cold water then hot water, then cold water again, to prevent the noodles from sticking together. Serve at room temperature.

PEANUT SAUCE

1 cup sweet glutinous rice
½ cup roasted peanuts
2 cloves garlic
1 Thai chile, stemmed
3 tablespoons red miso
3 tablespoons ketchup
3 tablespoons canola oil
3 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons vegetarian stir-fry sauce
1½ teaspoons lemon juice
½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil

Makes about 2 cups

1. Cook the rice in a rice cooker based on the manufacturer's instruction. Spread the cooked rice out on a baking sheet to let cool.
2. In a food processor, combine the cooled rice and the remaining ingredients. Process until the mixture becomes a fine paste. Thin the sauce with ½ cup of water and continue processing until the sauce is smooth and creamy. Transfer into a bowl and serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

CARAMEL SAUCE

2 pounds light brown palm sugar,
coarsely chopped
2½ cups fish sauce

Makes about 4 cups

In a medium saucepan, melt the sugar over medium-low heat until melted, about 10 to 12 minutes. Turn off the heat, and slowly stir in the fish sauce, taking care as the sugar will bubble. Let cool completely. Store in an airtight container for up to one month.