

Sever egg rolls from the restaurant by making these at home

By Sara Moulton

Who doesn't love an egg roll? For generations it's been Chinese cuisine's No. 1 hit in America. And why not? They're ubiquitous, they're fried, they're delicious, and you can eat them with your hands. Unfortunately, egg rolls are restaurant food. Making them at home can seem too daunting. First, there's a ton of prep. Second, you have to deep-fry them in a big pot of hot oil. Here's a solution in two easy steps; make the filling ahead of time and saute the rolls instead of deep-frying them.

Even if you weren't in a rush, you'd want to make the filling ahead of time. It needs to cool down before being added to the wrappers. Otherwise, it'll sog them up. So why not plan ahead and prepare this dish on a weekend? (With the new school year upon us, I'll note that filling and rolling the wrappers can be a fun task for the kids, almost as much fun as eating them.)

Here the egg rolls are filled with red pepper, carrots and Napa cabbage. But if you fill them with leftovers instead - shredded chicken, cooked broccoli, peas, etc. - you'll save yourself the trouble of having to slice and dice a mountain of raw ingredients. Do keep in mind, however, that all the ingredients need to be cooked before being stuffed into the wrappers. This step eliminates excess moisture and guarantees that everything is thoroughly cooked.

The great thing about a deep-fried egg roll is its crackly crisp shell. I'd never claim that sauteing them delivers the same crunch, but you'll get close. That said, you need to turn over each egg roll frequently as it cooks in the skillet to make sure that every part of its surface becomes nicely browned. Chinese restaurants classify egg rolls as appetizers, but I see no reason to confine them to a supporting role. These rolls are quite substantial and, with the addition of a simple side dish, they'll do a stellar job in the center of your dinner plate.



NOT FRIED EGG ROLLS WITH SOY SESAME DIPPING SAUCE

Ingredients

Servings: 4 to 6
Start to finish: 1 hour, 15 minutes
For the dipping sauce:
3 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons rice vinegar (unseasoned)
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon sesame oil
For the egg rolls:
1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 tablespoons minced ginger
2 teaspoons minced garlic
1/3 cup thinly sliced scallions
1 cup finely chopped red pepper
1 cup coarsely grated carrot
2 cups finely shredded Napa cabbage
1/3 cup chicken broth

2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
14 egg roll wrappers

Preparation

Make the dipping sauce: In a small bowl combine all the ingredients. Set aside. Make the egg rolls: In a large nonstick skillet heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium heat. Add the ginger and garlic and cook, stirring 1 minute. Add the pork and a hefty pinch of salt, reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring, until it turns white, about 2 minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to a medium bowl.

Add another tablespoon of the oil, the scallions, red pepper and carrot to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Add the cabbage, stock and soy sauce, and simmer, stirring until all of the liquid has evaporated and the vegetables are tender but not mushy. Add the mixture to the pork bowl, stir well and set aside to cool to room tempera-

ture. Clean the skillet and set it aside.

Working with two egg roll wrappers at a time arrange them on the counter with one of the corners facing you. Place level 1/4 cup of the filling in the center of the wrapper and bring up the bottom corner that is facing you half way up to cover the filling. Fold in the left and right corners of the wrapper snugly over the filling. Moisten the top corner and bring it down to form a rectangular package, pressing firmly to make sure the top corner is well glued.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in the large nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add half the rolls to the skillet, reduce the heat to medium and cook the rolls, turning them frequently until they are golden brown on all sides, about 6 to 8 minutes total. Transfer them to paper towels to drain and repeat the procedure with the remaining oil and remaining egg rolls. Transfer to plates and serve right away with the dipping sauce. — AP