

Vietnamese Beef and Cucumber Salad

Recipe 166 of 365

Although the stir-fry beef available in most grocery stores will work for this recipe, it will really be best with high quality cuts (such as tenderloin) sliced very, very thin. I buy mine from a local rancher, or in the section that sells thin, gristle-free cuts of meat for shabu-shabu at my local Asian grocery. Serve simply over lettuce, or over a bed of chilled rice noodles.

For a pescetarian version (*nuoc mam*, also spelled *nuoc nam* is fish-based), simply skip the beef and replace it with shredded carrots, green papaya, jicama, and perhaps a few peanuts or tofu pieces, if you're looking for protein.

The dressing for this salad is based on Mark Bittman's recipe for *Neua Nam Tok*, a grilled Vietnamese beef salad from *The Best Recipes in the World*.

TIME: 30 minutes

MAKES: 3 servings, or 4 servings over rice noodles

1/4 cup *nuoc mam*, *nam pla*, or other fish sauce
1/4 cup freshly-squeezed lime juice
1 small shallot, thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped
1/2 to 1 teaspoon sriracha (chili-garlic sauce)
1 tablespoon sugar
1 (1-pound) English cucumber, sliced 1/16" thin on a mandolin
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
1/2 packed cup mint leaves, torn into smaller pieces if large
2 tablespoons peanut or vegetable oil
1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger
1 pound thin-sliced beef for stir-frying, cut into bite-sized pieces, if necessary

Whisk the fish sauce, lime juice, shallot, garlic, sriracha, and sugar together in a large bowl until the sugar has dissolved. Add the cucumber slices and herbs, and toss to blend. Set aside.

Heat a wok or large, heavy skillet over high heat. When hot, add the peanut oil, then the ginger, and stir once. Add the beef and cook, stirring constantly, for about 2 minutes, or until no pink remains. Transfer the beef to a strainer and any liquid drain out while the beef cools, for about five minutes. Toss the beef with the cucumber mixture and serve immediately over lettuce or rice noodles, or refrigerate and serve the next day.