

# Table Salad

(Sa Lach Dia)

Simple Art of Vietnamese Cooking

Serves: 6



The integral part of the Vietnamese meal, also makes a beautiful centerpiece for the table. Traditionally, a table salad — traditional herbs, cucumbers, carrots, star fruit, and rice vermicelli — is served with finger foods such as cha gio, spring rolls, nem nuong, grilled pork meatballs, or banh xeo, sizzling "sound" crêpes. Often a bit of each ingredient is wrapped around a cooked morsel with a lettuce leaf. The table salad and wrapper, however, can vary according to the dish you serve. For example, if you were to serve nem nuong, you would use a softened rice paper rather than a lettuce leaf as a wrapper in order to add starch to the meal. If you wanted to serve banh xeo, stuffed rice flour crêpe, the rice vermicelli would be omitted because the crêpe provides the starch. It can be a little confusing, but one thing to remember is that your meal must be balanced with vegetable, protein, and starch.

## Ingredients

24 rice sheet, either small 6-inch circles or triangles  
1 head Boston lettuce, or 2 small, with leaves separated  
1 bunch fresh mint, small tender sprigs and large leaves  
1 bunch fresh coriander, separated into large sprigs  
1 cucumber, then sliced crosswise or large sticks peeled and seeded  
1 bunch scallions including tops, cut into 3-inch lengths  
2 cups mung bean sprouts  
2 sour starfruit, or 1 tart apple, thinly sliced  
18 perilla or shiso leaves (grape leaves are a substitute)  
1 garlic chive, small bunch

## Cooking Method

Dampen the rice papers...

1. Take a small stack of them at a time and run under cold water, making sure to let the water run between the layers.
2. Give the papers a shake and let them stand on a plate for about 3 minutes.
3. They will become translucent and stretchy.

Rinse the lettuce leaves and herbs.

1. Prepare the optional fruits or vegetables you are using.
2. On a large platter, arrange the lettuce leaves, herb sprigs, bean sprouts, and sliced garnishes.

Pull the rice papers from the plate they are softening on and put them on the platter along with the vermicelli if desired.

To serve, place the platter in the center of the table.

1. Each guest will peel a rice paper from the pile (they are quite resilient), put it on their plate, and start layering it with the lettuce and other garnishes.
2. Top with meat, seafood, or fried appetizer that requires the Table Salad and roll up the bundle.
3. Dip the roll into the dipping sauce and eat