

Salt and Serenity

Thai Lamb Larb

Serves 2-3

1 cup raw Thai or Jasmine rice
¼ cup red wine vinegar
¼ cup water
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon sugar
2 large carrots, cut into julienne
¼ purple onion, thinly sliced
½ English cucumber, cut into julienne
1 pound ground lamb
1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
¼-½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 Tablespoon toasted rice powder (available at Asian markets or make your own using the recipe below) optional
4 green onions, white and green parts, thinly sliced
1-2 teaspoons fish sauce
1-2 Tablespoons fresh limejuice
1 teaspoon brown sugar
¼ cup cilantro leaves
¼ cup mint leaves
1 head Boston lettuce, leaves kept whole, washed and dried
½ cup salted peanuts, coarsely chopped
Sriracha sauce

1. Cook rice according to package directions.
2. While rice is cooking make a *quickle* (quick pickle!!). In a medium sized bowl, mix together red wine vinegar, water, salt and sugar. Add carrots, onion and cucumber and mix well. Set aside to pickle for about 15 minutes. Drain vegetables and discard pickling liquid.
3. Heat a 10-inch non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add vegetable oil. Add ground lamb and using a wooden spoon or potato masher, break up lamb into small pieces. Add red pepper flakes, turn heat down to low and continue sautéing until lamb is cooked through. You want a low heat because you are not trying to brown the lamb.

4. Turn off heat. Add toasted rice powder, if using, and stir to combine. Stir in green onions. Add 1 teaspoon fish sauce, 1 Tablespoon limejuice and 1 teaspoon brown sugar. Mix well and taste. You are looking for a good balance of sour, sweet, salty and spicy. Add more fish sauce, limejuice, sugar or a squirt of Sriracha if you think it needs it. Transfer ground lamb to serving bowl.
5. Put steamed rice in a serving bowl. Set out lettuce leaves, fresh mint and cilantro and chopped peanuts. Let everyone assemble his or her own lettuce wraps. Serve Sriracha sauce on the side.

Toasted Rice Powder

½ cup raw Thai rice

1. Pour rice into medium sized non-stick skillet. Cook over medium-low heat for about 10 minutes, stirring and shaking every 15 seconds, to ensure that you get even browning. Do not be tempted to turn up the heat to high. The rice will burn. Once the rice looks like brown rice, pour it out of the skillet on a plate to cool completely.
2. Place about 2 tablespoons at a time into a spice or coffee grinder and grind until you have a fine powder. Store toasted rice powder in an airtight container at room temperature.