

Vegetable Sushi

from In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens

Ingredients:

for the rice:

2 tablespoons rice vinegar
1-1/2 tablespoons sugar
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
2 cups cooked short-grain sushi rice (we have been using Nishiki brand, but others are available), still hot

for assembly:

1 teaspoon rice vinegar
2 tablespoons water
2 to 3 sheets of nori (seaweed), cut in half
2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds (white or black or some of each)
2 baby cucumbers, peeled (or not!) and cut into thin pieces
several baby carrots, cut into thin pieces
1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and thinly sliced

for serving:

soy sauce or tamari
wasabi (optional: some people, like me, love it, while others find it too spicy)

Instructions:

Begin by making the seasoning for the rice. In a small saucepan combine the vinegar, sugar, and salt over low heat. Stir and heat until the sugar and salt dissolve (a minute or 2). Set aside to cool completely.

Cook the rice according to package directions. (I usually cook it for a little less time than the recipe suggests and then let it sit off the heat for 10 minutes to finish cooking on its own.)

Place the hot rice in a baking dish, using a spatula or paddle to spread it out evenly. Slowly pour in the vinegar mixture while slicing the spatula through the rice to make sure that it goes all the way through. Flip the rice so that all of it gets some of the liquid. Cover the rice with a clean, damp cloth while you get ready to make your sushi. (The seasoned rice is essential to really good sushi so don't try to skip this step.)

Combine the vinegar and water for assembly in a small bowl. Place 1 piece of nori, shiny side down, on a clean, dry work surface or sushi-rolling mat. The long side should be closest to you. Slice the nori in half so that you have two long sheets.

Scoop a couple of tablespoons of rice onto one of your sheets. Dip your fingers in the vinegar/water mixture to keep the rice from sticking to them; then gently flatten the rice on the sheet, leaving room on all sides but particularly on the long side opposite you.

Lightly sprinkle the rice with some of the sesame seeds; then place a few slices of cucumber, carrot, and avocado on top, keeping them fairly near you on the rice.

Lift the side of the nori closest to you, and roll it forward. The process is a little delicate. You want a small amount of pressure to keep the sushi together, but you don't want to squash it.

When the sushi is rolled, remove the mat (if you are using one) and slice the sushi into little rounds with a serrated knife. Serve with soy sauce and (if you like it) wasabi. Serves 6 as an appetizer.