

# Route 79 : Sushi Roll

The effects of feeling hungry on the way home

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November 17 2004

## Sushi Roll

A lot of people in the West mistakenly think of Japanese sushi as "raw fish". This is most certainly NOT the case! (The classic Japanese raw fish dish - which is thin slivers of various different fish - is commonly known as "sashimi". Not sushi!)

The term "sushi" is Japanese for "vinegar rice" - which is the classic short-grained rice that, when cooked, is rather sticky - and then folded in seasoned rice-vinegar. The sushi rice is typically served with various fish and vegetable accompaniments - and in various styles. The "nigri" style is the familiar small bite-sized "boat" shaped mounds of sushi rice topped with raw salmon, raw tuna or cooked omelette etc.

There is also the "maki" style of sushi - which is the sushi-rice rolled up in a sheet of seaweed (called "nori") along with whatever fillings (fish or vegetable and both) take your fancy - cooked or raw! These are often what you see packaged up as "sushi" in the chiller-cabinets of your local supermarket - e.g. Marks & Spencer - or in the cabinets at Pret a Manger etc. Although - most often in cases like this - the fillings are always cooked - e.g. cooked tuna - or smoked salmon etc.

There are two types of "maki" sushi roll - "thick" and "thin". The thick one is called "futo"-maki - and the thin one is called "hoso"-maki. They are both made in exactly the same way - except the thin one is made with a half-sheet of nori - and the thick one with a whole sheet. Obviously - the thick one can take more filling - and because it is thicker - it is sliced thinner than the "hoso"-maki sushi roll.

Since the Route79 tribe lives in an area of London which also has a fairly large Japanese ex-pat community - and a large Japanese shopping centre nearby - I was persuaded to learn how to make sushi - and in particular: sushi rolls!

These are incredibly easy to make - and believe me - is a lot of fun! You can choose whatever fillings you like - and whatever fillings you think will go well together - it kind of is an adventure in creativity!

There is an ancient Japanese tenet which suggests that each meal should comprise of 12 different colours - thereby ensuring a balanced meal. One thing is for sure - a lot about Japanese food is in the presentation. And some dishes can look rather exquisite! Also - because there are so many different ingredients - Japanese cuisine (especially sushi) is all about savouring several tiny morsels of food - not about "pigging out". On this basis - it can be really healthy to eat Japanese-style because you tend to eat less - and eat more varied fresh ingredients. Can't be bad eh?

Anyway - back to the topic: how to make sushi rolls: well first you need to pay a visit to your local Japanese shop - and get hold of the following ingredients:

- \* A packet of "nori" - seaweed sheets.
- \* A packet of Japanese "sushi" rice.
- \* A bottle of "seasoned rice vinegar" - for use in sushi
- \* A bottle of Japanese soya sauce - the ones specifically for sushi are best
- \* A tube of ready-prepared wasabi sauce - which is Japanese-style horseradish - VERY hot!
- \* A packet of thinly-sliced pickled ginger (pink)

Also: you will need a bamboo "sushi mat" - which is used for rolling "maki" sushi rolls. These usually cost less than 1 pound.

And for the fillings:

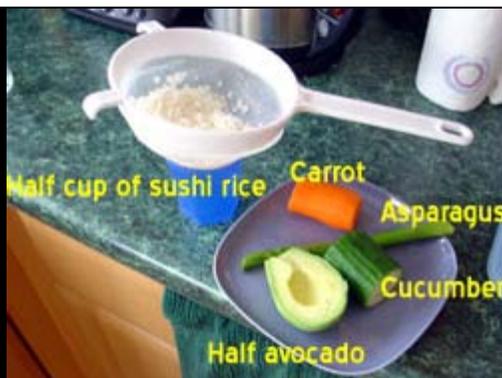
Well - whatever you want! But I got the following together for two different sushi-rolls:

Roll 1:

Small tin of cooked tuna chunks. Some julienned cucumber. A quarter of chopped avocado.

Roll 2:

Small tin of cooked red salmon flakes. 1 large stick of asparagus - lightly cooked. Some julienned carrot.



What you need to do is to cook the sushi rice first. For 2 "thick" sushi rolls - get half a cup of sushi rice - and rinse it thoroughly. Put it in a small saucepan with the same amount of water plus a little more - and bring the pan to a boil. Put the lid on - and turn the heat down to a simmer - and let cook for 10 mins. After 10 mins turn off the heat - keep covered - and let it sit for 10 more mins.

Whilst the rice is cooking - prepare the fillings - i.e. chopping them - and julienning them.



When the rice is cooked - and has stood for 10 mins - add a tablespoon of the seasoned rice-vinegar (I used the Mitsukan brand) - and "fold" the rice a few times so that all the rice is coated with the vinegar. Do this carefully with a wooden spoon or spatula - making sure you don't "mash" the rice in the process. You should do this in a separate plate - and blow on the rice gently so that it cools down in the process - without evaporating the vinegar. Make sure you DON'T use a metal plate or foil - as this causes the vinegar to react and become putrid.



Boil the asparagus stick for a few mins - and then blanch in cold water to cool it down. Slice it down the middle lengthways. Slice up the avocado half - and grate (julienne) the carrot and cucumber.

Also: get a couple of sheets of nori (seaweed) ready - and also lay out your "sushi mat". Organise all the fillings around your table in a kind of "work" station - and be sure to prepare a bowl of cold water with which to wet your hands when handling the sushi rice. The sushi rice is annoyingly sticky - and will relentlessly stick to your hands unless you have moistened them with water!

Grab a handful of the sushi rice - in this case about half of it since we are only making two futo-maki rolls. Place the rice onto the nori sheet - and spread out. Make sure you leave gaps at the edges of the nori sheet.

Then add the fillings on top of the rice - in the centre of sheet - lengthways along the sheet.

I used the tuna, cucumber and carrot in one roll. And the salmon, asparagus and avocado in the other.



Then - using the bamboo mat - roll up the sushi and filling - using the mat to shape and compress the roll - and when it is nearly rolled up completely - moisten the edge of the nori sheet with water so that it seals properly into a full roll. Continue to roll and manipulate the roll so that it is nicely compressed and evenly rounded. Then put to one side - and slice up into 2cm-thick slices. Make sure you dip the knife in water before every slice so that the roll cuts clean.



Get some soya sauce ready - and serve the slices of sushi roll onto a presentation plate. The one I used in the pic is cheapo melanine fake-bamboo leaf style plate that looks quite pretty. Add a little condiment plate - with a few slices of the pickled ginger and a squirt of the green wasabi sauce.



### Sushi roll.

The way you eat sushi roll is using chopsticks. Or just use your fingers if you like! Take the wasabi sauce and mix it about in the soya sauce. Then pick up a sushi-roll slice with the chopsticks and dip into the soya-wasabi mixture - and then pop the whole thing in your mouth in one go! In between sushi roll pieces - eat a slice of the pickled ginger - this will "cleanse" your mouth so that you can really enjoy the flavours and combinations of the next sushi-roll slice!

Enjoy!

It is really important that you eat sushi like this as fresh as possible. If you make it like I have described - then you should eat it up within a few hours. So - if you are making for your lunch - then make it in the morning before you go to work. Place it in the fridge when you get to work - making sure it's clingfilmed properly. When you are ready to eat - take it out of fridge - and let it get to room temperature before eating. I clingfilmed the entire plate as you see it above - and took a small "Fuji film" canister of soya sauce to work in my pocket. That way I could simply pour the soy sauce into the the condiment plate when I was ready to eat my sushi roll!

Have you tried this? Even if you haven't - let me know what you think!

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