

Pancake with Pork and Shrimps Recipe

(bahn khoai)

Ingredients:

1/2 pound lean pork, shredded
1 pound small to medium fresh shrimps, peeled and de-veined
2 teaspoons fish sauce
2 teaspoons minced garlic
1 teaspoon Chinese rice wine (preferably Shao Hsing), optional
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 scallions, green and white portions separated, minced
2 cups rice flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon castor sugar
3/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
2 1/4 cups water
3 large eggs
3 cups bean sprouts, washed and drained
1 red or brown onion, halved and sliced very thinly across
1/2 cup vegetable oil

Accompaniments:

2 whole butter lettuce, leaves washed and dried
1 cup firmly packed mint leaves
1 cup firmly packed coriander (cilantro) leaves
2 small star fruits or 1 small cucumber, thinly sliced across
Vietnamese Dressing (nuoc cham) Dip

Method:

Put the pork and shrimps in a bowl and add the fish sauce, garlic, rice wine, pepper, and the white portion of scallions. Mix well with your fingers and set aside. Combine the rice flour, salt, sugar, and turmeric in a bowl and gradually stir in the water to make a very thin batter. Put the eggs in a bowl and beat lightly with a fork. Set near the stove. Prepare the Accompaniments. Arrange the lettuce leaves, mint, coriander, and star fruit on a serving platter. Divide the dip between four to eight small bowls. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a wok. When hot, add the pork and shrimp mixture and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate and divide into eight portions. Put the green portion of scallions, bean sprouts and onion in a bowl and gently toss with your fingers, then add to the portions of pork and shrimps.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large frying pan, preferably cast-iron or non-stick, swirling it around to completely grease the base and sides. Tip out the excess oil and save it for greasing the pan next time. Re-heat the pan and when very hot, stir the batter, then measure 1/3 cup and pour it quickly into the frying pan, tilting the pan so that it spreads over the bottom; don't worry if there are a few small gaps. Scatter over one portion of the pork, shrimp and bean sprout mixture. Cover the pan and cook over medium heat for 2 minutes. Uncover the pan and drizzle over about 2 tablespoons of the beaten egg, filling in any gaps that might have been left in the pancake. Cover and cook over medium heat for 1 minute. Remove the lid and cook uncovered for about 1 minute, to make sure the bottom is crispy, then fold the pancake in half and transfer to a serving plate (see Note). Repeat, adding oil to the pan and stirring the batter each time until you have made eight pancakes. Serve with the Accompaniments and dip. The pancakes are normally broken into pieces and tucked in a lettuce leaf with the herbs, a slice or two of star fruit or cucumber and a dollop of sauce, then rolled up and eaten.

Note: Ideally, each pancake should be served immediately and eaten while still hot and crisp. A frying pan set on tabletop burner would be ideal, saving you from running back to the kitchen repeatedly; alternatively, you could use two frying pans and cook two pancakes at the same time to speed things up.

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