



[Photograph: sushinorth.net]

Caterpillar Roll

WITH GRILLED UNAGI AND KABAYAKI SAUCE

It's called a Caterpillar roll because the rice is enshrouded with thin slices of overlapping avocado. With stripes of dark kabayaki sauce drizzled on top, and sesame seeds dotting the roll, it doesn't take a stretch of the imagination to see the resemblance.

Ingredients

- 1 batch Sushi rice
- ¼ cup Soy sauce
- ¼ cup Sake
- ¼ cup Sugar
- 2 packs Unagi (cut into ½ inch strips)
- 2 Avocados (halved, peeled, pitted and sliced)
- 1 Hot house cucumber (seeds removed with a spoon and julienned)
- 1 pack Unseasoned nori

Instructions

- 1** Make the kabayaki sauce by adding the soy sauce, sake and sugar to a small pan and boiling until most of the liquid has evaporated and the mixture is thick and syrupy.
- 2** Roll your Caterpillar Roll with the rice on the outside, so you need to cover your makisu (bamboo mat) with plastic wrap to keep the rice from sticking. Prepare a small bowl of water to dip your fingers in to keep the rice from sticking to them.
- 3** Carefully fold your nori in half, if the nori is fresh, it should easily split in half along the fold and make two 3.75 inch x 8 inch pieces. If it's not splitting easily, use scissors to cut the nori in half.
- 4** Lay one piece of nori towards the bottom of the mat. Lightly wet your fingers with water, then add a small amount of rice onto the nori.
- 5** Make sure your fingers are moist, then use your fingertips to gently spread the rice out to the edges of the nori in a thin even layer. Don't use too much pressure, or you'll end up mashing the grains of rice together.
- 6** Flip the rice and nori over so that the rice is facing down and the nori is facing up. Place some cucumbers along the bottom edge of the nori, then top with the unagi.
- 7** Tuck your thumbs under the bamboo mat, then use the rest of your finger to hold the filling in place. Roll the mat up and over the filling.
- 8** When the mat has come all the way around the roll, you'll need to keep rolling with one hand, while using the other to lift the mat out of the way so you don't roll it into your sushi.
- 9** Once the Caterpillar Roll is fully rolled, give the whole thing a hug with your fingers. This will compress the rice which will help keep it from falling apart when you slice it.
- 10** Splay the avocado slices over the roll making sure each thin slice of avocado overlaps the next for greater visual affect and even taste.
- 11** Wrap the roll with the bamboo mat again, and give it one more hug.
- 12** Transfer the finished Caterpillar Roll to a cutting board and use a long sharp knife (preferably a sushi knife) to slice the roll into 8 pieces. Start slicing the roll by putting the back edge of the knife on the roll and pulling the knife towards you, using the weight of the knife to slice through the roll. If you press down, you will smash the roll.
- 13** Plate the roll, and drizzle with the kabayaki sauce. You can garnish with two sprouts (antennas) and some sesame seeds if you want, but they're not necessary. I also like dusting a little sansho powder on top.

Rich and Creamy Vegan Ramen

WITH ROASTED VEGETABLES AND MISO BROTH

This is the bowl of vegetarian ramen. It has a rich, creamy broth that's layered with flavor and thick enough to coat the noodles as they're slurped from the bowl, plus little pools of glistening, flavorful fat, and four different toppings that deliver on texture and flavor. This is hands-down the best bowl of ramen I've ever made.

Ingredients

For The Broth

1 small eggplant
1 medium skin-on yellow onion, split in half
2 whole heads garlic
1 (4-inch) knob ginger, cut into ¼- to ½-inch slices lengthwise
1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
Stems from 6 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms (caps quartered and reserved for shiitake soy sauce, below)

1 (6-inch) segment kombu
½ ounce dried porcini mushrooms
½ ounce dried shiitake mushrooms
6 leaves napa cabbage

To Finish

¼ cup white or yellow miso paste
3 tablespoons Japanese sesame paste or tahini
2 medium cloves garlic, finely minced
4 to 6 servings raw ramen noodles

Instructions

- 1 Make the Broth:** Adjust rack to 4 to 6 inches below broiler element and preheat broiler to high. Toss eggplant, onion, garlic, and ginger with 1 tablespoon oil until coated on all surfaces. Transfer to a foil-lined broiler pan or rimmed baking sheet. Broil, turning vegetables occasionally until all vegetables are well charred on all surfaces and eggplant is completely tender (a knife inserted into it should meet no resistance around the stem or base). Remove from oven, lower rack to center position, and adjust oven temperature to 400°F. Wrap eggplant in aluminum foil and reserve for the charred eggplant topping.
- Transfer onions, ginger, and garlic to a large stock pot or Dutch oven. Add shiitake and maitake mushroom stems, kombu, ½ ounce dried porcini mushrooms, ½ ounce dried shiitake mushrooms, cabbage, leek, and 6 scallions. Cover with water by 1 inch. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce to a bare simmer, cover, and cook while making remaining toppings (about 1 ½ hours).
- 3 For the Shiitake-Soy Tare:** Combine shiitake mushroom caps, kombu, ginger, scallions, garlic, soy sauce, and mirin in a small saucepan. Bring to a bare simmer, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid is reduced by about half and mushrooms are very tender and flavorful, about 30 minutes. Discard kombu, ginger, scallions, and garlic. Strain mushrooms through a fine mesh strainer set in a liquid measuring cup.
- 4 For the Mushroom-Scallion Oil:** Combine dried porcini, dried shiitake, scallions, and oil in a small saucepan. Place over medium heat and cook, stirring, until scallions and mushrooms are releasing a thin, steady stream of bubbles. Remove from heat, cover, and set aside to infuse.
- 5 For the Charred Eggplant Topping:** Unwrap eggplant and slit skin lengthwise. Discard the skin. Spin eggplant to remove excess liquid. Add eggplant liquid to the pot of stock on the stovetop. Transfer eggplant flesh to a small bowl and stir in sesame seeds and 1 tablespoon of shiitake-soy tare. Season to taste with salt.
- 6 Finish the Broth:** Strain broth through a fine-mesh strainer or chinois into a clean pot. Cut the top off the garlic heads and squeeze out the cloves (they should be very tender). Discard skins. Transfer garlic and ½ cup of roasted sweet potato to the jar of a blender. Add 1 cup of strained stock. Blend, starting on low and increasing to high speed, until completely smooth, about 1 minute. Whisk garlic/sweet potato mixture into the finished broth. You should have a little over 2 quarts of finished broth. Season broth to taste gently with salt.
- 7 To Serve:** In a small bowl, stir together miso paste, sesame paste, minced garlic, and 6 tablespoons of shiitake-soy tare. Heat stock until just under a simmer on the stovetop. Preheat 6 serving bowls in the oven for 2 minutes. Remove from oven. Divide miso mixture evenly among the 6 bowls. Add 1 ½ cups hot broth to each bowl and stir gently to incorporate miso mixture. Cook ramen noodles. Drizzle each bowl with 1 tablespoon of the mushroom-scallion oil. Top with simmered shiitake caps, roasted sweet potato, roasted mushroom, eggplant mixture, and scallions.





[Photograph: J. Kenji Lopez-Alt]



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