

Make Sushi at Home

Anyone can make sushi rolls at home -- and duly impress your family and friends in the process. All it takes is learning a few tricks of the trade. Sushi is healthy, delicious, and fun, with plenty of room to improvise and be creative with the fillings and condiments.

Sushi rice and nori (toasted seaweed) are the two common elements to all sushi. It's helpful to have a bamboo sushi mat (which you can find in some grocery stores) to make the rolls look more uniform and smooth, but it's not essential.

There are three styles of sushi rolls, and you can use the same fillings in all of them:

- **Maki** - Seaweed on the outside and rice and fillings inside, in a cylinder shape
- **Inside-Out Uramaki** - Rice on the outside and seaweed, rice, and fillings inside, also in a cylinder shape
- **Hand Rolls** - Shaped like little ice cream cones, with the seaweed as the cone and the rice and fillings inside

It may take a few tries to perfect your technique for making the rolls tight. It's not hard, but you have to find the way that works best for you. If you want to work ahead, the sushi can be made earlier in the day and kept covered in plastic wrap in the refrigerator to keep the rice moist. When you're ready, just slice and serve along with the condiments. Have fun!

Sushi Rice

Makes approximately 3 large rolls cut into 18-24 pieces or 12-16 hand rolls

1 1/2 cups short-grain white rice, such as Cal-Rose

1 1/2 cups water

1 teaspoon salt

6 tablespoons rice vinegar

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1. To make the sushi rice, place the 1 1/2 cups rice in a medium bowl, pour cold water over it, and swish the rice around with your hand. The water will become cloudy. Pour off the water and rinse one more time the same way.
2. Place the drained rice in a medium saucepan with the 1 1/2 cups of water and 1 teaspoon of salt. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, approximately 15 minutes, or until the water is absorbed. Turn off the heat and let the rice rest, covered for 10 more minutes. If you're using a rice cooker, follow the rice cooker directions, but be sure to keep the ratio of water to rice the same as in this recipe.
3. While the rice is cooking, make the seasoned vinegar. Add the vinegar, sugar and 1 teaspoon salt to a small saucepan. Bring to a boil and stir. When the sugar has dissolved, remove from the heat and let cool.

4. Pour the seasoned vinegar evenly over the rice while it's still in the pot, using a paddle or large spoon. Try not to mash the rice.

5. Let the rice cool in the pot, or spread it out in a large bowl.

The Toasted Seaweed (Nori)

It comes in packages of approximately 10 sheets that measure about 8" x 7 1/4 " each and is available in some grocery stores and Japanese markets.

Seasoned Mayonnaise

Make this according to your own preference. Combine a few tablespoons of mayonnaise with rice vinegar or lemon juice, and hot sauce, wasabi paste, or Dijon mustard to taste. Try it a few ways to see which you like best. Place the seasoned mayonnaise in a small plastic bag and snip a little hole in a bottom corner. When you're ready to apply the mayonnaise, you can just squeeze it out of the little hole in the bag.

The Bamboo Sushi Mat

Cover the mat with plastic wrap entirely on both sides. That way the sushi roll won't stick to it. To clean, just remove the wrap.

A Bowl of Cold Water

Have a bowl of cold water to the side as you work. The sushi rice is very sticky, and you'll need to dip your hands in the cold water before spreading it over the seaweed.

Maki Rolls (Seaweed on the Outside)

Place a sheet of seaweed, shiny side down, on the bamboo mat. Spread 3/4 cup of seasoned rice evenly over the seaweed, but leave a 1 1/2" border along the top edge. The layer of rice should be thin. Dip your hands in the cold water before you press the rice to make it less sticky.

Place the filling horizontally over the center 3 inches, laying it on relatively flat. Squeeze some seasoned mayonnaise on top. Roll the sushi from the bottom to the top, squeezing and pulling it tight. Use the uncovered seaweed border at the top to seal the roll by simply pressing or squeezing it. Use a serrated knife to cut each roll into 6-8 pieces by cutting in half and then each half in thirds or quarters.

Inside Out Rolls (Rice on the Outside)

Place the seaweed on the mat, shiny side down. Spread 1 cup of the seasoned rice evenly over the entire sheet. Flip the sheet over so the rice side is touching the mat. Spread 1/4 cup of seasoned rice in a 3-inch band across the center, horizontally, in a thin layer.

Place fillings over the rice band, laying it on relatively flat. There should be a 2-inch border of uncovered seaweed along the top and bottom. Squeeze some of the seasoned mayonnaise over the fillings. Roll the sushi from the bottom to the top, squeezing and pulling it tight. Use the uncovered seaweed border at the top to seal by simply pressing or squeezing it.

You can roll the outer rice in white or black sesame seeds or in tiny orange fish eggs called "flying fish caviar". Use a serrated knife to cut each roll into 6-8 pieces by cutting in half and then each half in thirds or quarters.

Hand Rolls (Cone Shape that Fits in Your Hand)

Fold the nori sheet in half so it measures about 4" x 8". Lay the sheet horizontally with the long

side at the bottom. Place 1 heaping tablespoon of the seasoned rice in the left half of the sheet, at a 135-degree angle up to the left corner. Place additional fillings on top of the rice and squeeze a little seasoned mayonnaise on top. Fold the uncovered bottom left corner over the filling and wrap the rest of the seaweed around to make a cone shape. Hand rolls should be eaten soon after they're made because there's less rice to keep the filling from making the nori soggy.

Fillings

Feel free to improvise and combine fillings. Here are some of the most popular.

Vegetable (avocado, cucumber, carrot, cooked asparagus)

Julienne the carrot and cucumber into 3" strips. Cut the avocado into thin strips. If the asparagus spears are fat, cut them into quarters lengthwise and then into 3" strips.

Seafood (California Rolls)

Use tiny or medium-size cooked shrimp, real crab, or imitation crab sticks. Add avocado and/or cucumber.

Raw Fish

The fish should be impeccably fresh. Salmon, tuna, and yellowtail are the most common. Cut in thin strips to lay across the rice horizontally, or chop the fish and combine it with the spicy mayonnaise.

Philadelphia Roll

Smoked salmon and Philadelphia cream cheese, both cut in strips. I like to add green onions or chives.

Sweet Egg Omlet

1 egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon sugar and 1/4 teaspoon salt, fried like a pancake, and cut into thin strips.

Spam (Hawaii's favorite)

Spam, sliced and pan-fried and cut into strips.

Brazilian Sushi

Strips of fresh mango and/or firm banana that have been sauteed in oil and cut into strips about 3" long.

Condiments

These can be found in the Asian section of the grocery store or in the fresh sushi section.

Wasabi paste

Soy sauce

Soy sauce and wasabi mixed in a little dish

Gari (pickled, sliced ginger)