

Toss to good health with a raw fish salad



Japanese Yu Sheng Salad ST PHOTO: NIVASH JOYVIN

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A twist on the classic raw fish salad recipe adds Japanese flavours, packs in nutrients

[Sylvia Tan](#)

I served this raw fish salad many times during the New Year just past and each time it was a hit, with many friends requesting the recipe.

Then I thought, why serve it only during the festive season?

It is a salad that can, and should, be eaten all year round!

It is, after all, just fish, albeit raw, sitting on a bed of greens, topped with nori (seaweed) and roasted sesame seeds, all lightly drizzled with an enticing wasabi dressing.

It has many advantages over the traditional yu sheng salad. The vegetables are not shredded, making it convenient to serve on any day.

It is important to buy your fish from the sashimi counter at supermarkets because the fish is chosen and stored properly for eating raw.

The fish is of sashimi quality - so you do not have to worry about contamination of the fish, the cause of previous food scares associated with the traditional salad.

And, best of all, the dressing is not overly sweet.

I have always found the sweet- plum dressing of the traditional salad overpowering. It is not helped by the sweet pickles that usually accompany the dish, nor the wish for sweetness loudly recited as part of the litany of well wishes voiced during the tossing of the salad.

In this Japanese-inspired version, there is more fish in the dish, there is seaweed and, yes, there is the all-important kick of wasabi in the dressing. This is a straightforward mixture of peanut and sesame oil, seasoned with soya sauce and lemon, lifted by mirin, a sweet rice wine favoured by the Japanese in their recipes for its subtle sweetness.

Of course, you could add more or less vegetables according to your whim but, if health is on your agenda, do include lots of juicy greens, crisp cucumbers and pretty pink baby radishes.

I also like to add whatever baby sprouts I can find, though they are not included in the recipe.

For those who do not know, these are living vegetables, sold in their own planting container, which you harvest only upon serving, preserving their nutrients to the maximum. If you are using sprouts, scatter these on top of the fish slices.

It is important to buy your fish from the sashimi counter at supermarkets because the fish is chosen and stored properly for eating raw.

I would also buy the fish on the day that I want to serve the dish, for optimum freshness.

While I used salmon for this recipe, I have tried using hamachi (yellowtail). Choose the fish you prefer.

I used baby spinach and rocket leaves or arugula for my bed of greens but you could opt instead for lettuces.

I am also increasingly using Japanese cucumbers for salads these days for they are crunchier than the other kinds of cucumber, which have larger and softer cores.

Aside from their sweet colour, the baby radishes nestled among the greens also deliver a subtle bite to the dish.

Do not forget the finishing touches: shredded nori seaweed and roasted sesame seeds, both available in packets at Japanese shops. They add nuttiness and a shot of sweet saltiness to the final dish.

Like I said, this is not just a festive salad, but one that I could eat all year round!

• Sylvia Tan is a freelance writer and cookbook author. Her previous Eat To Live recipes can be found in two cookbooks, Eat To Live and Taste.

JAPANESE YU SHENG SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 punnet baby spinach leaves, about 100g
- 1 punnet rocket leaves, about 100g
- 100g or more sashimi-grade salmon (or hamachi), sliced thinly
- 2 Japanese cucumbers, sliced
- 6 pink baby radishes, sliced thinly
- 1 handful or more roasted black nori strips (available in packets at supermarkets)
- A scattering of roasted sesame seeds

DRESSING

- 1/2 cup peanut oil
- 1 tsp roasted sesame oil
- Juice from half a lemon
- 1 tsp wasabi paste, either made with the powder or squeezed from a tube
- 1 Tbs light soya sauce to taste
- 2 Tbs mirin to taste (Japanese sweet rice wine, available from Japanese supermarkets)
- Pepper and salt to taste

METHOD

- Make the dressing by mixing all the ingredients together, whisking till it emulsifies. Taste to adjust the seasoning. Set aside.

- Wash and dry salad leaves, and place on a large plate.
- Top with sliced cucumbers and radishes.
- Lay the fish slices on top.
- Garnish with shredded seaweed and sesame seeds.
- Drizzle the dressing over the fish and toss at the table. Enjoy.

SERVES FOUR TO FIVE

HOW TO PREPARE THIS DISH SO THAT IT'S SAFE FOR CHILDREN

This salad dish uses spinach and rocket leaves, which have the same calorie content but differ in their vitamin K content.

Spinach leaves have 480micrograms of vitamin K per 100g while arugula has 109micrograms per 100g. Vitamin K plays an important role in blood clotting.

This dish also has black nori strips, a type of seaweed. These strips are high in iodine, which is good for regulating metabolism and a source of potassium and magnesium. Mirin, a sweet rice wine used commonly in Japanese cooking, is added to the dish.

While children above the age of two are encouraged to eat the same food as adults, introducing alcohol at that age is still not encouraged.

To make a dish that uses mirin safe for their consumption, cook the mirin on high heat to allow the alcohol to evaporate. The sweetness of the wine will remain in the dish but not the alcohol.

This means that mirin in salads which do not undergo heat treatment are not safe for children. But this is a personal choice for parents who opt to use mirin with a very low alcohol content.

There are different grades of mirin and the alcohol content can range from as low as 1 per cent to as high as 14 per cent. Babies should not be given mirin, as their liver and kidneys are not mature enough to handle even the slightest amount of alcohol.

This is a dish that is low in carbohydrates but not necessarily in calories. The calorie content is high due to fat in the peanut oil, which is calorie-dense. But the quality of fat is mainly unsaturated, which is the preferred fat.

To make this dish healthier, I would trim the amount of peanut oil by half to reduce the overall calorie and fat content.

If you want to reduce the sodium content, you can omit the salt as the recipe already uses light soya sauce.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Per Serving (195g)

ENERGY: 552 kcal

PROTEIN: 8.2g

TOTAL FAT: 54.5g

SATURATED FAT: 9.8g

CHOLESTEROL: 13mg

CARBOHYDRATE: 7.2g

DIETARY FIBRE: 2.4g

SODIUM: 654mg

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