

## Sushi

Today, on the show I made sushi. For years I have been eating sushi and I still cannot resist a piece even when I am full. Sushi now appears world wide with a United States increase in popularity around the late 1970's. As in art, Japanese Sushi continues to grow, change and blossom. The most common forms are: Nigiri Sushi (hand shaped sushi), Oshi-Sushi (pressed sushi), Maki-Sushi (rolled sushi) and Chirashi-sushi (scattered sushi). The changes are not in form or preparation as much as they are in the ingredients and the atmosphere and ambience where it is served. These adventurous and tasty creations can be found in the most elegant of settings or the grocery market counter. The most common roll has to be the California roll.

Viewers and friends alike are always asking me for tips. The number one hint or tip is this: rolling sushi is a self-correcting process. If your first roll does not turn out quite right, eat it to hide the evidence and roll another, which will be much better. If it has been a while since you made a roll, the first one may leave something to be desired, but it will all come back to you, like riding a bicycle or playing a piano.

*Rice doesn't stick to nori or roll does not stick together when rolled. You most likely did not use enough vinegar in your rice. The rice should be very sticky, annoyingly so.*

*Roll is too thick, or does not hold together well. You probably used too much rice, or packed it down too tightly. The rice should be spread on the nori to within about 5/8-inch of what will be the outer edge, should not be squished onto the nori, and should not cover the nori completely. You should be able to see nori between the rice kernel; perhaps 1/4 to 1/3 of the space should be open to the nori below the rice.*

Cucumber can be cut into larger chunks which are easier to work with. Try quartering the cuke lengthwise, removing the seeds, then cutting the flesh into a few large pieces about 1/4 inches thick by 3/8 inch wide. The length of the pieces should be half the width of the nori.

The thick-skinned black avocados are easier to work with. Cut in half and remove the pit. Then cut each half into half again. Using a paring knife, slice the avocado in the peel, and then run the knife just under the peel to cut the slices from the peel. It is easier and faster than peeling the avocado and then slicing it.

Place a square of plastic wrap between the nori and the bamboo mat when making rolls. This will keep the rice and messy ingredients out of the mat and make it last longer. (Washing a bamboo mat often is NOT recommended as it warps when it dries). Peel the plastic wrap back with the mat as you roll. When you are finished, wrap the roll in the plastic wrap and put the roll in the refrigerator. When you are finished making several rolls and are ready to serve them, unwrap and slice them.

### **California Rolls**

1 portion of cooked sushi rice (recipe below )  
10 sheets nori seaweed, halved  
½ pound imitation crab, cut into long, thin pieces  
¼ cup mayonnaise  
1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, and julienned  
1 avocado, peeled, seeded, and cut into long, thin pieces  
Sesame seeds

Cover a bamboo sushi mat with plastic wrap. Place half of a sheet of seaweed over the plastic on the mat. Place a handful of rice across the seaweed and spread evenly over the seaweed (I find it easier if you dip your hands in some vinegar and water mixture). Toss the imitation crab with the mayonnaise in a small bowl. Place some imitation crab meat along the center of the rice. Add some cucumber and avocado along the center of the rice. Using the mat and plastic wrap, roll the rice around the filling and press lightly to seal. Remove mat and plastic wrap and sprinkle the roll with sesame seeds. Cut the sushi roll into bite sized pieces. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

**Really Easy Sushi Rice**

3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups Japanese rice, such as Nishiki (or 5 Rice Maker cups)

3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups water (or 5 Rice Maker cups)

½ cup rice vinegar

4 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

Place the rice in a bowl and cover with lots of water. Stir rice in water with your hands or a spoon, then pour off most of the water, agitate 10 to 15 times by quickly moving your hand back and forth, swishing rice against side of bowl, this will help get rid of any foreign bodies etc. Rinse - you are looking for the water from the rice to be almost clear. Transfer the rice to a colander and let drain for 1 hour, (undisturbed). Place the rice into a Rice Cooker; add the water, cover and cook as directed by manufacturer's directions. While the rice is cooking, bring rice vinegar to a boil in a small saucepan, and then remove from the heat. Add sugar and salt and stir until dissolved. Allow to cool to room temperature.

When rice is cooked, allow cooked rice to remain in Rice Cooker for 10 minutes. Transfer rice to a large shallow mixing bowl, so that rice forms a mound in the center of the bowl. Using a diagonal slicing motion, gently cut into rice with a wooden spoon, and pour cooled vinegar mixture over top of rice. Mix the rice several times to evenly distribute vinegar mixture; allow rice to cool; gently turn rice over from time to time with paddle so that rice cools evenly. You might want to consider using a hair dryer (on the cool level) if time is of the essence. When rice has cooled to body temperature, it is ready to use for sushi rolls. The rice can be kept at the proper temperature by placing it in an insulated container such as a small ice chest, covered with a damp kitchen towel.