

THAI LETTUCE WRAPS

Wrapping spicy morsels of fried pork and baby spinach with crisp lettuce leaves is definitely a more labor-intensive dinner than piling everything onto a plate. But it's also a lot more fun—and allows diners to adjust the lettuce-to-pork ratio to their taste. Serve the lettuce, herbs, vegetables, and pork separately, and let everyone combine them as they like. Small bowls of sticky or regular rice balance the heat and add to the meal. Or, if you're having a party, offer this as an hors d'oeuvre, scooping the pork into endive or the crispest, most inner leaves of a Bibb lettuce and putting it out on a platter garnished with the basil, nuts, and shallots. However you serve it, the combination of crisp-edged, chile-laden ground pork seasoned with lime and basil is addictive.

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon Asian fish sauce

Finely grated zest of ½ lime

1 teaspoon fresh lime juice

½ teaspoon honey

⅛ teaspoon kosher salt, plus
more as needed

1 tablespoon peanut oil

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 fresh Thai, serrano, or jalapeño
chile, seeded and finely chopped

1 scallion (white and green parts),
finely chopped, plus more for serving

1 lemongrass stalk, trimmed, outer
layers removed, inner core minced
(optional)

1 pound ground pork, not too lean
if possible (or use ground turkey)

5 cups (5 ounces) fresh baby spinach

½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn into
pieces

Chopped cashews, for serving

Thinly sliced shallots, for serving

Shredded carrots, for serving

Lime wedges, for serving

Lettuce leaves, for serving

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, fish sauce, lime zest and juice, honey, and the ⅛ teaspoon salt.

2. Heat the peanut oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, chile, scallion, and lemongrass if using. Cook until fragrant, 30 seconds. Then stir in the pork and cook until it is well browned and most of the juices have evaporated, about 7 minutes. (Use a flat spatula to press down on the pork so it can get very browned and crispy on

the bottom. This adds great flavor and texture.)

3. Add the soy sauce mixture and cook for 1 minute. Stir in the spinach and cook until wilted. Toss in the basil. Taste, and adjust the seasoning if needed.

4. Transfer the pork mixture to a platter, and surround it with mounds of scallion greens, cashews, shallots, and carrots. Serve lime wedges alongside for sprinkling, and lettuce leaves for wrapping.

TOTAL TIME: 25 MINUTES

SERVES 4