

# FOOD & DINING

Try something new in the kitchen



Trying new recipes is part of the joy of cooking for many amateur and even professional cooks and chefs. Oftentimes, fun can be had when trying foreign cuisine that's not easily found at grocery stores or nearby restaurants. Those who want to try a taste of Vietnamese from the comforts of home can indulge in the following recipe for "Fried Glass Noodles with Fish or Eel (Mien Xao Luon)" from "Vietnamese Home Cooking" (Periplus) by Robert Carmack, Didier Corlou and Nguyen Thanh Van.

**Fried Glass Noodles with Fish or Eel (Mien Xao Luon)**  
Serves 8

- 1 pound skinless fish or eel fillets (see note), finely diced
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon ground pepper
- 12 dried black mushrooms
- Leaves from 2 large sprigs Vietnamese mint (rau ram) or spearmint
- 1 bunch Chinese (flat/garlic) chives
- 1 6 1/2-ounce packet cellophane (bean thread) noodles
- About 1 cup vegetable oil for frying
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 cups bean sprouts, rinsed and drained

- 2 fresh long red chilies, seeded and cut into thin strips
- 2 lemons, cut into wedges
- Asian chili sauce for serving (optional)

In a medium bowl, combine fish or eel, fish sauce and pepper. Stir well and refrigerate until ready to use, at least 20 minutes. Soak mushrooms in hot water for 20 minutes, then drain, squeezing to remove all liquid. Use scissors or a small knife to cut tough stems; discard. Cut mushroom caps into small dice and set aside.

Stack a few Vietnamese mint leaves together and roll tightly into a cylinder. Use a sharp knife to cut crosswise into thin shreds. Repeat with remaining leaves. Cut chives into 1 1/2-inch pieces.

Prepare noodles (see below). Using scissors, cut noodles to manageable lengths for serving.

Transfer fish to a plate, reserving marinade in a bowl, and pat fish dry with paper towels. Heat oil in a wok or large frying pan over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add one-third of the fish and stir-fry until almost crisp, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain.

Reduce heat to medium, draining all but 1/4 cup of the oil. Add remaining fish plus marinade and mushrooms, and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Then add noodles and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Finally, add chives, onion, garlic, bean sprouts, reserved fried fish, and remaining marinade.

Stir-fry for 1 minute and sprinkle with Vietnamese mint. Transfer to a serving plate and garnish with the reserved crispy-fried fish and chilies. Serve with lemon wedges, and chili sauce, if desired.

Note: This is a very old Hanoi recipe, and popular restaurants there specialize in eel dishes. Sturgeon is probably the closest in texture to eel, although tender catfish fillets, as well as oily garfish and smelt, can also be substituted. Spanish mackerel is another option.

To prepare cellophane noodles:

1. Immerse in very hot, but not boiling, water for exactly 1 minute and drain. A subsequent cold-water bath stops the cooking process.
2. Use scissors to cut to the desired length.
3. Cellophane noodles used directly from the packet can also be deep-fried until crisp and used as a garnish.

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