



Lemon-cured Tuna with Vietnamese Herb Salad

One of my favourite Vietnamese dishes is bo tai chanh, a salad of beef cured in lemon juice, and the same method works just as well with tuna in this pescatarian version. Whatever protein you use, it's a very quick dish to prepare once you have all the ingredients on hand, and it's great as a starter, main course, or part of a shared feast. As the acid of the lemon 'cooks' the fish, slicing it thinly is important, so sharpen your knife before you start; it's also important to use sashimi-grade fish as it is still technically being eaten raw. If raw fish isn't your thing, stir-fry it for a few seconds to just sear it, then add it to the marinade. This simple salad relies on a few key flavours, including spicy white pepper, so be sure it's freshly ground and be generous – either measure the ½ teaspoon or give it a good 8–10 grinds of the pepper mill.

Serves 2 as part of a shared meal

INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 300g block sashimi-grade tuna (10½oz)
- 2 sprigs betel leaves
- Vietnamese Herb Salad, for serving
- 1 tablespoon Sweet Fish Sauce (20ml)
- 2 teaspoons Crushed Roasted Peanuts
- Steamed jasmine rice, for serving
- Pickled ground chilli, for serving



Lemon Marinade

- ½ cup (125ml) strained lemon juice (about 1½ – 2 lemons)
- 1 tablespoon castor sugar (18g/¾oz)
- 2 teaspoons fish sauce (10ml)
- ½ teaspoon crushed salt flakes
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

METHOD

1. Trim any visible sinew from the tuna and discard it. Place tuna in a sealed bag in the freezer for about 1 hour to firm it up (taking care not to leave it so long that it freezes solid).
2. Finely slice tuna, mix through Lemon Marinade, push the pieces down gently so they're all submerged and set aside for 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, line a platter with betel leaves.
4. Drain tuna, squeezing very gently to remove some of the excess liquid; discard the Lemon Marinade.
5. Add tuna to Herb Salad and toss thoroughly.
6. Arrange on top of the betel leaves.
7. Drizzle with Sweet Fish Sauce and sprinkle with peanuts.
8. Serve immediately with rice and chilli on the side
9. To eat, wrap a piece of tuna with some salad and chilli in a betel leaf.