

## KEN HOM OBE'S CRACKLING RICE PAPER ASPARAGUS ROLLS

Asparagus, native to the Mediterranean, has been cultivated in the West since antiquity. Now widely cultivated throughout the world, it is a popular vegetable, prized for its delicate flavour. In this recipe, I use rice paper that is made from rice flour, water and salt, an easy sustainable wrapper. I love its ability to envelope food with a crispy crackling skin while keeping the food moist. It is a simple dish to make, a vegetarian treat.

Serves 4 – Makes about 30 rolls

### Roll filling:

450 g (1 lb) asparagus

1 teaspoons salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground peppercorn to taste

1½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons fresh chives, finely chopped

2 tablespoons spring onions, finely chopped

1 tablespoon fresh coriander, finely chopped

3 tablespoons sun-dried tomatoes, finely chopped

### Sealing mixture:

3 tablespoons plain flour

3 tablespoons water

### Casing:

One package Banh Trang dried rice paper 22 cm (8½ in) rounds

150 ml (5 fl oz) olive oil

Trim the tough ends of the asparagus to 14 cm (5½ in) and discard.

Blanch the asparagus in a large pot of boiling salted water for 3 minutes. Drain immediately and plunge in cold water to stop it from cooking. Drain well.

Combine the asparagus with the salt, pepper, olive oil, chives, spring onions, fresh coriander, and sun-dried tomatoes.

Make the flour paste by mixing the flour and water together.

When you are ready to make the rolls, fill a large bowl with warm water. Dip a rice paper round in the water and let it soften one minute. Remove and drain on a linen towel.

Place three asparagus and a little of the tomato herb mixture and roll the edge over the asparagus at once, fold up both ends of the rice paper, and continue to roll to the end. Seal the end with a little of the flour paste mixture. The roll should be compact and tight, rather

like a short, thick finger cigar about 7.5 cm (3 in) long. Set it on a clean plate and continue the process until you have used up all asparagus.

(The rolls can be made ahead to this point; cover loosely with dry linen cloth and refrigerate for up to 4 hours.)

Heat a wok or large frying-pan over high heat until it is hot. Add the oil, and when it is hot and smoking, turn the heat down to medium and pan fry the rolls a few at a time, until they are golden brown. They have a tendency to stick to each other at the beginning of the frying, so only fry a few at a time. Do not attempt to break them apart should they stick together. You can do this after they have been removed from the oil. Continue frying them until you have cooked them all. Drain them on kitchen paper and serve at once.