

Star-Studded Shrimp Salad

Lucy Wing, New York LDEI Chapter

This Thai-inspired dish combines sweet, salty, sour, and spicy flavors that complement the tropical carambola slices. Serve it as a first course appetizer.

3 small carambolas (see Note)

2 large limes

2 t. dried red pepper flakes

½ t. plus a sprinkling of coarse (kosher) salt

2/3 c. sugar

¼ c. rice vinegar

2 T vegetable oil

2 dozen medium shrimp (about ¾ pound), shelled and deveined

1/3 c. thinly sliced shallots

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

4 c. torn spinach leaves (large stems removed)

¼ c. chopped salted peanuts

Trim ends off each carambola. Cut each crosswise into 1/4-thick star-shaped slices. With the tip of a paring knife, carefully remove any visible seeds from the slices. Wrap and chill slices.

Cut 1 lime into 8 wedges; wrap and chill for garnish later. Cut other lime in half and ream to extract 2 T. juice.

In a small saucepan, heat pepper flakes a few seconds over high heat until fragrant. Remove from heat and add ½ t. salt, the sugar, and vinegar. Return to medium heat and stir mixture until sugar dissolves and mixture just boils. Pour pepper syrup into a small bowl; stir in lime juice and set aside to cool.

In a large skillet, heat oil over high heat. Add shrimp and stir-fry just until shrimp begin to turn pink and curl. Add shallots and garlic; stir-fry shrimp until they are firm and pink. Transfer shrimp mixture to a bowl to cool, draining off all juices that have accumulated. Stir 2 T. of the pepper syrup and a sprinkling of salt into shrimp mixture. Cover and chill shrimp until ready to serve.

Just before serving, line 4 salad plates with spinach leaves. In a large bowl, toss shrimp mixture with carambola slices. Divide mixture evenly over spinach leaves. Drizzle salad with remaining pepper syrup; sprinkle with peanuts and garnish each with 2 lime wedges. Makes 4 servings.

Note: If carambolas are large, use 2 of them and cut each lengthwise in half before slicing.