



Lumpia Three-Ways

CRISPY 🥟 | CREATIVE 🎨 | CUSTOMIZABLE 🧩 | COMMUNAL 🍴

*Crispy on the outside, open minded on the
inside*

Vibes - Lumpia Part 1

Where it came from

Lumpia took shape through movement and adaptation. Its earliest roots trace back to Chinese spring rolls that arrived in the Philippines through trade, then evolved as Filipino cooks made the idea their own—adjusting fillings, seasoning, and technique to match local ingredients, tastes, and occasions. Over time, lumpia became a distinct part of Filipino food culture, recognizable in form but flexible by design.

Why it endures

Santa Maria barbecue wasn't about excess or spectacle; it grew out of ranching communities that needed food which could feed people well without expensive ingredients or complicated techniques. Tri-tip fit that need perfectly: one affordable cut, seasoned simply, cooked over live fire, and sliced thin so everyone could share.

Vibes - Tri-Tip Part 1

Why It Matters

Lumpia is as much about people as it is about food. It's often made together—rolled assembly-line style at kitchen tables, shared across generations, and served in ways that invite everyone to reach in. The process itself encourages connection, turning cooking into a communal act rather than a solo performance.

Modern Takes

Today, lumpia continues to evolve without losing its identity. Home cooks experiment with new fillings and sauces while keeping the same basic method—fill, wrap, cook, share. The result is a dish that stays rooted while remaining open to interpretation, shaped by whoever is gathered around the table.

Grandpa Bill's Lab Notes

Grandpa Bill didn't cook by recipes — he cooked by paying attention. He watched how food reacted to heat, salt, and time, and he trusted his senses more than instructions. These notes exist to capture that way of cooking: not as rules to follow, but as observations worth remembering.

For lumpia, success comes down to balance. The filling should be flavorful but not wet, the roll should be snug without being overstuffed, and the cooking should be hot enough to crisp without forcing things apart. Think in terms of texture and restraint rather than exact measurements—when each part does its job, the whole thing comes together naturally.

The Lab Notes that follow aren't meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive. They're here to highlight the moments that matter — the parts of the process where slowing down a little, or doing less on purpose, leads to better food and a calmer cook.

Lab Notes

On the Filling

You can get creative here! My three variations are just examples so feel free to experiment. In general, the filling should be flavorful but not wet. You're looking for a mixture that holds together when pressed without feeling loose or pasty. Too much moisture makes rolling harder and frying messier, so think balance over excess.

On the Wrappers

Lumpia wrappers are usually sold frozen and need time to relax. Thaw them fully, then let them come to room temperature before separating—cold wrappers are stiff, fragile, and frustrating. If they stick, don't force them; give them a few minutes and they'll loosen on their own.

Lab Notes

On the Rolling

Roll snug, not bulky. You want one clean wrap with the ends tucked, not an overstuffed cylinder. Tight rolling matters more than fancy sealing—if the roll is secure, it will hold together just fine. And remember, Lumpia is made to be made together so don't hesitate to invite some friends to help.

On the Cook

Lumpia likes hot oil and patience. Fry until deeply golden and crisp, turning gently and avoiding overcrowding. The goal is crunch on the outside and a fully cooked filling inside—no rushing required. Rest on a wire rack or paper towel to help drain excess oil. Baking or air frying is also an option here if you'd like to avoid frying. You'll still want to lightly brush the lumpia with oil to help get that golden crisp.

Lab Notes

On the Dipping Sauces

Lumpia is often served with some kind of dipping sauce, and this is another place where you can keep things simple or get creative. For the three versions here, a sweet chili sauce pairs well with the Shanghai, classic buffalo sauce works naturally with the blue cheese chicken, and the cheeseburger lumpia is served with the same cheese sauce used for the MacFongo Balls. Use what you love—sauce is meant to complement, not complicate.

Ingredients

Wrappers & Frying

- Lumpia wrappers (about 30–35 wrappers)
- Neutral oil, for frying (about 1½–2 quarts)

Proteins

- Ground pork — 1 lb
- Ground beef — 1 lb
- Chicken thighs (boneless, skinless) — 1½ lb

Dairy

- Cheddar cheese — 6 oz (cut into small chunks or shreds)
- Blue cheese (or gorgonzola) — 4 oz

Ingredients

Vegetables & Aromatics

- Yellow onion — 1 medium
- Scallions — 1 bunch
- Carrots — 1 large

Pantry & Seasoning

- Salt
- Black pepper
- Garlic (fresh or granulated)
- Buffalo sauce (not just hot sauce—use store-bought or make your own with Frank's and butter – you need the extra fat to bind)

Cooking Instructions

Prep the wrappers

Thaw lumpia wrappers fully and let them come to room temperature before using. Cold wrappers are stiff and difficult to separate; relaxed wrappers are flexible and forgiving.

Prep the filling - Shanghai

Combine ground pork, finely chopped carrot, onion, and seasoning. Mix just until the filling holds together when pressed—flavorful but not wet.

Prep the filling - Cheeseburger

Mix ground beef with onion and seasoning. Keep the mixture loose, then fold in small chunks or shreds of cheddar just before rolling so the cheese stays distinct.

Prep the filling - Buffalo Blue Cheese Chicken

Combine cooked, finely chopped chicken with scallions and blue cheese. Add a small amount of buffalo sauce—just enough for the mixture to hold together without becoming saucy.

Cooking Instructions

Roll the lumpia

Place a small amount of filling near one edge of the wrapper. Roll snugly, tuck the ends, and finish with a tight seam. Seal lightly with water if needed. Avoid overfilling—tight rolls fry better than bulky ones.

Fry until crisp

Heat oil to medium-high. Fry lumpia in batches, turning gently, until deeply golden and crisp on all sides. Don't overcrowd the pan; patience makes better crunch.

Drain and serve

Transfer to a rack or paper towels to drain briefly. Serve hot with dipping sauces of your choice.