

Long Noodles Mean Long Life

By: Carol Harvie Yamaguchi

Fragrant noodle soup is a common element in Asian cuisine. Perhaps the most famous and beloved noodle soup of all is the ubiquitous ramen. Wonderfully satisfying and infinitely variable, ramen is the perfect winter food. Japanese Ramen has ingredients such as fried pork, seaweed, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, hard boiled egg, chili oil and Japanese 7 spice seasoning. The broth is typically made from chicken or pork bones and is seasoned with miso, shio (salty) or shoyu (soya sauce). Another comforting soup that is probably available in almost every cultural cuisine, is chicken noodle soup. An interesting variation on this theme is Korean Naeng Myon, a refreshing summer soup, which is a chicken broth served cold with noodles. What makes this soup so delicious is the addition of various garnishes such as thinly sliced strips of chicken, omelette, pear, kimchee (pickled cabbage), dried seaweed, and sesame seeds. This recipe can be varied with buckwheat noodles and beef broth or even egg noodles and seafood.

Apart from being an ideal accompaniment to soup, noodles are also an excellent salad base. Noodles add texture and substance to salads along with fresh vegetables, herbs, and exotic dressings. Cold rice noodles served with a rich spicy sauce made from coconut milk, lime juice, chili and peanuts and then garnished with cilantro make a light Indonesian salad. Sunomono is a classic Japanese salad made with bean thread noodles, cooked crab or shrimp, thinly sliced cucumber, and a vinegary dressing. A traditional Vietnamese noodle salad contains shredded cabbage, lettuce, carrots, celery, spring onions, coriander, cooked ham, cooked chicken, cooked beef, cooked crab and cooked shrimp which are all mixed in with cold noodles (any type) and dressed with a fish sauce.

Fried noodles are also extremely popular and satisfying. Chinese Chow Mein is a mixture of stir fried vegetables and noodles with a seasoning sauce made from hoisin, oyster, soya sauce and sherry. Phad Thai is a traditional fried noodle dish that incorporates classic Thai flavours of lemongrass, peanuts, lime, sesame oil and cilantro. Singapore Noodles is a recipe that is varied according to whatever ingredients are available at the time but is basically stir fried vegetables and noodles with shrimp or pork and a seasoning of lemon juice, soya sauce and cilantro. Japanese Yakisoba utilizes shredded cabbage, carrot, beef and buckwheat noodles fried in a tangy sweet sauce. A festive and memorable dish in Korea is Chap Chae which is a stir fry of delicate strips of mushrooms, cloud ear (black fungus), carrot, onion, green pepper, beef, and mung bean noodles that are seasoned with sesame, chili, garlic and soya sauce. The recipes are endless and the seasonal variations are infinite.

Just remember to slurp loudly the next time you are dining in a noodle restaurant in Japan; slurping noodles is an acceptable custom in Japanese culture and is a gesture of appreciation. Another point to remember in Asian cuisine is that the longer the noodle, the longer your life. So enjoy!

Yaki Soba (Japanese Stir-Fried Noodles)

1 ½ tbsp.oil
7 oz. roast pork, thinly sliced
6 cabbage leaves, slivered
1 green pepper, slivered
1 carrot, slivered
7 oz. bean sprouts
salt/pepper
1 lb. Ramen, boiled, drained and patted dry
4 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp. soy sauce
Nori seaweed, crushed

Heat half the oil. Sauté pork and vegetables until tender.
Season with salt and pepper. Remove from pan and set aside.
Heat remaining oil; fry noodles for 3 minutes over medium heat.
Return pork and vegetables to pan.
Season with soy sauce and Worcestershire sauce.
Fry 1-2 minutes more. Serve, sprinkled with crushed seaweed.