

Takeout-Style Sesame Noodles

(/recipes/9558-takeout-style-sesame-noodles)

By Sam Sifton | Time: 10 minutes | Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

1 pound Chinese egg noodles (1/8-inch-thick), frozen or (preferably) fresh, available in Asian markets
2 tablespoons sesame oil, plus a splash
3 ½ tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons Chinese rice vinegar
2 tablespoons Chinese sesame paste
1 tablespoon smooth peanut butter
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon finely grated ginger
2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons chili-garlic paste, or to taste
Half a cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1/8-inch by 1/8-inch by 2-inch sticks
¼ cup chopped roasted peanuts

Nutritional Information

Nutritional analysis per serving (4 servings)
628 calories; 20 grams fat; 3 grams saturated fat; 0 grams trans fat; 8 grams monounsaturated fat; 7 grams polyunsaturated fat; 90 grams carbohydrates; 5 grams dietary fiber; 6 grams sugars; 21 grams protein; 95 milligrams cholesterol; 797 milligrams sodium

Note: Nutrient information is not available for all ingredients. Amount is based on available data.

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Preparation

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add noodles and cook until barely tender, about 5 minutes; they should retain a hint of chewiness. Drain, rinse with cold water, drain again and toss with a splash of sesame oil.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the remaining 2 tablespoons sesame oil, the soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame paste, peanut butter, sugar, ginger, garlic and chili-garlic paste.
3. Pour the sauce over the noodles and toss. Transfer to a serving bowl, and garnish with cucumber and peanuts.

The "Chinese sesame paste," above, is made of toasted sesame seeds; it is not the same as tahini, the Middle Eastern paste made of plain, untoasted sesame. But you could use tahini in a pinch. You need only add a little toasted sesame oil to compensate for flavor, and perhaps some peanut butter to keep the sauce emulsified.

On which subject, the whole point of cold sesame noodles is what's called in the food trade its "mouth feel," the velvety smooth feeling of perfectly combined ingredients. That's why you find so much peanut butter in preparations of cold sesame noodles. Peanut butter emulsifies better than sesame paste.

Hey, where are the Sichuan peppercorns? Sichuan food depends on their tingly numbing power! Perhaps, but the little fruits were banned from the United States from 1968 until 2005 by the Food and Drug Administration because they were feared to carry citrus canker, a bacterial disease. And while you could always find them in Chinatowns somewhere (sitting, dry and baleful, in a pile), there are few in the true cult of sesame noodles who use them in their recipes. By all means, add some if you like: toast a tablespoon's worth in a dry pan, crush lightly and whisk the resulting mess into your sauce.

Adapted from Martin Yan, Marian Burros, and memory