



Japanese-Style Stir-Fried Noodles with Beef

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 16: Serving Up Noodles and Rice

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

For a home cook–friendly version of this classic Japanese noodle stir-fry, we started by isolating the best possible supermarket alternatives to hard-to-find Japanese ingredients. In place of chewy *yakisoba* noodles, we use lo mein noodles (which also contain an alkaline ingredient that gives them some elasticity) and undercook them to enhance their chew. We also rinse them very well with cold water, which removes surface starches and makes them appropriately slick. We treat thinly sliced flank steak with baking soda to ensure that each piece is tender and juicy. Soy sauce, Worcestershire, ketchup, and rice wine vinegar make up the savory-sweet sauce—a facsimile of the traditional version made with Japanese Worcestershire sauce.

Serves 4 to 6

This recipe calls for lo mein noodles, but use yakisoba noodles if you can find them and follow the same cooking directions. Garnish the noodles with pickled ginger (often found in the refrigerated section of the grocery store near tofu) and our Sesame-Orange Spice Blend (see related content) or, if you can find it, commercial *shichimi togarashi*.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/8** teaspoon baking soda
- 12** ounces flank steak, trimmed, sliced lengthwise into 2- to 2 1/2-inch strips, each strip sliced crosswise 1/4 inch thick
- 1/4** cup ketchup
- 1/4** cup soy sauce
- 2** tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 1/2** tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 3** garlic cloves, minced
- 3** anchovy fillets, rinsed, patted dry, and minced
- 1** teaspoon rice vinegar
- 1** pound fresh or 8 ounces dried lo mein noodles
- 1** tablespoon vegetable oil
- 6** ounces shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1** carrot, peeled and sliced 1/8 inch thick on bias
- 3/4** cup chicken broth
- 6** cups napa cabbage, sliced crosswise into 1/2-inch strips
- 7** scallions, cut on bias into 1-inch lengths
- Salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine 1 tablespoon water and baking soda in medium bowl. Add beef and toss to coat. Let sit at room temperature for 5 minutes.
2. Whisk ketchup, soy sauce, Worcestershire, sugar, garlic, anchovies, and vinegar together in second bowl. Stir 2 tablespoons sauce into beef mixture and set aside remaining sauce.
3. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add noodles and cook, stirring often, until almost tender (center should still be firm with slightly opaque dot), 3 to 10 minutes (cooking times will vary depending on whether you are using fresh or dry noodles). Drain noodles and rinse under cold running water until water runs clear. Drain well and set aside.
4. Heat 1/2 teaspoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over high heat until just smoking. Add mushrooms and carrot and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are spotty brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Add 1/4 cup broth and cook until all liquid has evaporated and vegetables are tender, about 30 seconds. Transfer vegetables to bowl.
5. Return skillet to high heat, add 1/2 teaspoon oil, and heat until beginning to smoke. Add cabbage and scallions and cook, without stirring, for 30 seconds. Cook, stirring occasionally, until cabbage and scallions are spotty brown and crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to bowl with mushrooms and carrot.
6. Return skillet to high heat, add 1 teaspoon oil, and heat until beginning to smoke. Add half of beef in single layer. Cook, without stirring, for 30 seconds. Cook, stirring occasionally, until beef is spotty brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to bowl with vegetables. Repeat with remaining beef and remaining 1 teaspoon oil.
7. Return skillet to high heat; add reserved sauce, remaining 1/2 cup broth, and noodles. Cook, scraping up any browned bits, until noodles are warmed through, about 1 minute. Transfer noodles to bowl with vegetables and beef and toss to combine. Season with salt to taste, and serve immediately.

TECHNIQUE

HOW ASIAN NOODLES GET THEIR SPRING

Asian noodles come in countless varieties, but many, including *yakisoba*, ramen, and lo mein, are characterized by a satisfying chew. These springy noodles contain the same core ingredients as Italian pastas—wheat flour and water—along with two salts, sodium and potassium carbonates, that raise the pH of the dough. A little research confirmed that the alkaline environment increases the bonding between gluten strands, making the gluten network stronger and more elastic, for noodles that stretch and spring back. The effect of the alkalizing salts is clearly visible if you compare cooked Italian spaghetti strands with the alkaline noodles: The former swell more and have less give, while the latter stay firm and chewy.

HOLDING STRONG: Elastic alkaline noodles are so resilient that they can hold more than 4 ounces of weight before breaking. (Tender Italian spaghetti can hold only 1 3/4 ounces.)



TECHNIQUE

THE OTHER WORCESTERSHIRE

Yakisoba sauce (Japanese Worcestershire sauce) is a thicker, sweeter relative of the familiar British kind. To create a facsimile with similar flavor and body to the popular Bull-Dog brand's, we used widely available Lea & Perrins, doctoring it with ketchup, soy sauce, rice vinegar, and brown sugar.



