

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Cooking noodles, stir-fries, soups, cold salads, sauces, handmade noodles and instant upgrades

8 Chapters | Philip Osztromok | Generated with Claude

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Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 1 · Know Your Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Recognise the main types of noodle, cook each one properly and sauce hot noodles so they stay glossy.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

There are many noodles, but you can sort them into a few families by what they are made of. **Knowing which you have tells you how to cook it,** and how long: most cook in just a few minutes, and the difference between perfect and mush is often under a minute.

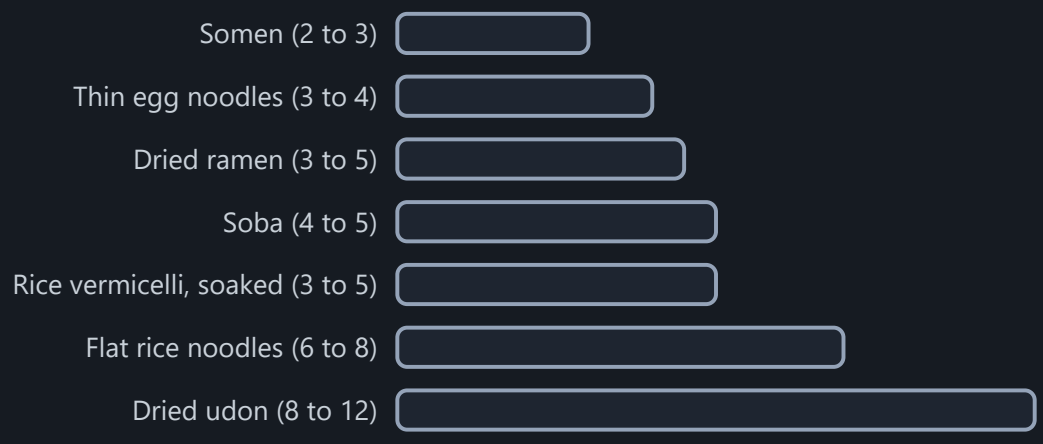


Figure 1. Noodles cook in minutes, not tens of minutes. Brands differ, so always check the pack and taste a strand.

The main noodle families

FAMILY	MADE FROM	EXAMPLES	TEXTURE
Wheat	Wheat flour and water (sometimes salt)	Udon, somen, ramen, thin wheat noodles	Springy and chewy, from slippery thin to thick and chewy
Egg	Wheat flour and egg	Egg noodles, chow mein noodles	Rich and springy, yellow
Rice	Rice flour and water	Rice vermicelli, flat pad Thai noodles, rice sticks	Soft and slippery; no gluten (check the label)
Buckwheat	Buckwheat flour, often with some wheat	Soba	Earthy and slightly grainy
Glass (cellophane)	Mung bean or sweet potato starch	Glass noodles	Slippery, chewy and transparent

Fresh, dried or instant

- **Dried:** keep for months in the cupboard. Cook as the pack says. The best value for most dishes.
- **Fresh (chilled):** cook very quickly (often 1 to 3 minutes) and keep in the fridge until the use-by date. Often available in the chilled aisle.
- **Instant:** pre-cooked and dried, ready in minutes. Chapter 7 shows how to turn them into a real meal.

How to cook them

1. **A big pan of boiling water:** noodles need room to move, or they stick.
2. **Salt wheat and egg noodles lightly if you wish;** rice noodles and soba don't need it.
3. **Stir at the start,** then once or twice. Don't walk away.
4. **Taste a strand near the end:** tender with a slight spring, not mushy or chalky in the middle.
5. **Drain at once.** For hot dishes, don't rinse (the starch helps sauce cling); for cold dishes, rinse until cold (see Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 4).
6. **A drop of oil** stops them sticking if they have to wait.

How much?

Plan on about **75 to 100 g of dried noodles per person** for a main dish, and about 50 to 60 g for a soup. Noodles roughly double or triple in weight when cooked.

Storing

- **Dried noodles:** in a dry, cool cupboard, tightly closed.
- **Fresh noodles:** in the fridge, used by the date, or frozen in a bag.
- **Cooked noodles:** cool quickly, chill within 1 hour, eat within a day.

BOILING WATER AND STORING

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

Leftovers: cool noodle dishes quickly (within about 1 hour), keep them covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** (soups with meat or egg: 2 days, with the noodles stored separately), and reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

Small children: long, slippery noodles can be a choking risk for very young children: cut them short for them and sit with them while they eat.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Three noodles cooked right

25 minutes | 3 small portions (to taste and compare) | boiling, soaking and testing different noodles

Cook a little of each type, one after another, so you can feel the difference. You are not making a dish: just learning what a properly cooked noodle is like. Taste a strand every 30 seconds near the end.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

100 g	dried egg noodles
100 g	dried flat rice noodles (about 5 mm wide)
100 g	dried thin wheat noodles (or somen)
1 tsp	oil for tossing
1 pinch	salt (for the egg and wheat noodles)

1. **Egg noodles:** bring a large pan of water to the boil with a pinch of salt. Add the noodles, stir once, and cook for the time on the pack (usually 3 to 4 minutes). Taste a strand: it should be tender with a slight spring. Drain and toss with a little oil.
2. **Thin wheat noodles:** cook in the same way, usually 2 to 4 minutes, and stir gently to keep them from sticking. Drain and toss with a little oil.
3. **Flat rice noodles:** don't boil them hard. Cover them with just-boiled water in a bowl and leave for the time on the pack (usually 6 to 8 minutes), until soft but still a little firm. Drain.
4. Taste all three side by side. Notice the colour, the springiness and how they cling together, and write it in the tasting-notes table.

BOILING WATER AND STORING

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

Leftovers: cool noodle dishes quickly (within about 1 hour), keep them covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** (soups with meat or egg: 2 days, with the noodles stored separately), and reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

> **Allergens:** most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 1 · QUICK

Soy butter noodles

15 minutes | 2 portions | saucing hot noodles in the pan

A five-ingredient comfort dish: hot noodles tossed in salty, savoury butter. Save a cupful of the cooking water: the starch in it helps the sauce cling.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried egg noodles
2 tbsp	butter
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
2	spring onions, thinly sliced
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water as in the last recipe. Before draining, scoop out half a cup of the cooking water.
2. Drain the noodles. Return the empty pan to a low heat and melt the butter with the soy sauce and sugar, stirring until the sugar dissolves.
3. Add the noodles and a splash of the cooking water and toss for 30 seconds until every strand is glossy.
4. Serve at once, scattered with the spring onions and black pepper.

ALLERGENS AND CHILDREN

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free. The butter adds milk.

Small children: long, slippery noodles can be a choking risk for very young children: cut them short for them and sit with them while they eat.

LEVEL 2 · AROMATIC OIL

Garlic and spring onion oil noodles

20 minutes | 2 portions | flavouring oil with hot aromatics

Hot oil poured over spring onion and garlic releases their aroma instantly. The noodles are tossed in this fragrant oil with soy sauce: very simple and very good.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried thin wheat or egg noodles
4	spring onions, thinly sliced
3	garlic cloves, thinly sliced
4 tbsp	neutral oil (vegetable or sunflower)
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
1 tbsp	rice vinegar

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water, drain and put them in a bowl. Stir the soy sauce, sugar and vinegar together and pour over the noodles.
2. Put the spring onions and garlic in a heatproof bowl or on top of the noodles. Heat the oil in a small pan over a medium heat until it shimmers (about 1 minute: if the garlic sizzles instantly when you drop in a piece, it is ready).
3. Pour the hot oil over the spring onion and garlic: it will sizzle loudly. Stir everything together and serve at once.

HOT OIL

Hot oil: never leave a pan of hot oil unattended. If oil starts to smoke, take the pan off the heat and let it cool. Never put water on a pan fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or damp cloth, then get out of the room and call 999 if it spreads. Dry vegetables and noodles well, because water on hot oil spits.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label

> them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · SAUCE

Sesame soy noodles

20 minutes | 2 portions | thinning a thick paste into a sauce

A creamy sesame sauce that coats hot noodles. The trick is to whisk the thick tahini with the soy and a little noodle water until it turns smooth and pale: it looks wrong and then suddenly right.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried wheat or egg noodles
1 tbsp	tahini or sesame paste (or smooth peanut butter)
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil
1 tsp	sugar
1 tbsp	rice vinegar
4 tbsp	warm noodle cooking water
1 tbsp	sesame seeds, toasted
½	cucumber, cut into matchsticks (optional)

1. Cook the noodles, saving half a cup of the cooking water, and drain.
2. Whisk the tahini, soy sauce, sesame oil, sugar and vinegar in a large bowl, adding the warm noodle water a spoonful at a time until the sauce is smooth and creamy.
3. Add the hot noodles, toss until coated and add more water if it seems dry.
4. Top with sesame seeds and cucumber and serve warm or cold.

> **SESAME, PEANUT AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Sesame and peanuts:** both are common allergens. Check labels and label any dish you share.
>
> **Allergens:** most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label

them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Salted or unsalted water

Does it matter?

1. Cook two small portions of egg noodles, one in water with a good pinch of salt and one in unsalted water. Taste both plain.

Look for: The noodles cooked in salted water taste seasoned all through. The unsalted ones taste flat on their own, although a salty sauce hides the difference.

EXPERIMENT

Rinse or not

Starch and stickiness.

1. Cook two portions of wheat noodles. Rinse one under cold water and leave the other unrinsed. Let both sit 10 minutes.

Look for: The unrinsed noodles clump and stay warm and starchy. The rinsed ones stay loose but are cooler and slightly less glossy when dressed.

EXPERIMENT

To the minute

Taste every 30 seconds.

1. Cook a portion of egg noodles, taking out a strand every 30 seconds from 2 minutes. Taste each.

Look for: The noodles go from chalky to springy to soft in just a minute or two. This shows how narrow the window is, and why tasting beats the clock.

EXPERIMENT

Oil to stop sticking

A drop makes a difference.

1. Cook two portions of thin wheat noodles. Toss one with a little oil and leave the other plain. Wait 15 minutes.

Look for: The oiled noodles stay loose; the plain ones set into a lump. Oil helps if the noodles have to wait.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Three noodles cooked right				
Soy butter noodles				
Garlic and spring onion oil noodles				
Sesame soy noodles				
Salted or unsalted				
Rinse or not				
To the minute				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Oil to stop sticking				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Noodles stick together	Not enough water, or not stirred, or left waiting	Use a big pan; stir at the start; toss with a little oil
Mushy, gluey noodles	Overcooked	Taste early; drain at once; cook a little under for stir-fries
Hard, chalky middle	Undercooked	Cook another 30 to 60 seconds and taste again
Bland noodles	Unsalted water and mild sauce	Salt the water lightly; season the sauce well
Rice noodles broke into pieces	Boiled too hard	Soak in just-boiled water instead of boiling
Sauce won't cling	Noodles rinsed or too wet	Don't rinse for hot dishes; use a splash of cooking water

BOILING WATER, HOT OIL AND ALLERGENS

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

Hot oil: never leave a pan of hot oil unattended. If oil starts to smoke, take the pan off the heat and let it cool. Never put water on a pan fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or damp cloth, then get out of the room and call 999 if it spreads. Dry vegetables and noodles well, because water on hot oil spits.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Leftovers: cool noodle dishes quickly (within about 1 hour), keep them covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** (soups with meat or egg: 2 days, with the noodles stored separately), and reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can tell the main noodle families apart.

☐ I can cook noodles in a big pan and taste for doneness.

☐ I know when to rinse and when to keep the starch.

☐ I can sauce hot noodles so they stay glossy.

☐ I store cooked noodles safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 2 is Stir-Fried Noodles: hot pans, loose noodles and sauce at the end.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 2 · Stir-Fried Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Stir-fry noodles so they stay loose and springy, with a very hot pan and a sauce added at the end.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A stir-fry is cooked in minutes, so everything depends on preparation. For noodles the secrets are **noodles that are slightly under-cooked, drained very well and kept loose**, a very hot pan, and a sauce added at the end so the noodles fry rather than steam.

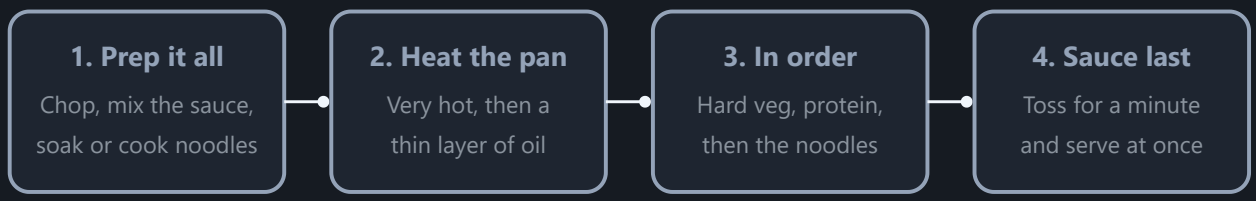


Figure 2. The order of work for a stir-fry. The cooking takes minutes, so the preparation has to be finished first.

Getting the noodles ready

NOODLE	BEFORE THE PAN	WHY
Egg and wheat	Boil a minute under the pack time, rinse, drain well, toss with a little oil	They finish cooking in the pan and don't clump
Thin rice vermicelli	Soak in just-boiled water, drain well	Boiling breaks them up

NOODLE	BEFORE THE PAN	WHY
Flat rice noodles	Soak in warm water for 20 to 30 minutes	They go soft and finish in the sauce
Instant noodles	Soak or boil briefly, drain well	See chapter 7

The stir-fry rules

- **Prepare everything first:** chop, mix the sauce, drain the noodles. Once the pan is hot there is no time.
- **A very hot pan:** a wok or large frying pan, hot before the oil goes in, so food sears instead of stewing.
- **Small batches:** a crowded pan steams. Cook in two batches if you need to.
- **Order matters:** hard vegetables first, then softer ones, then protein if it is cooked, then the noodles.
- **Sauce last,** poured round the edge of the pan so it sizzles, then toss for a minute.
- **Keep it moving** and serve at once.

Sauce basics

- **Light soy sauce** for salt; **dark soy sauce** for colour and a little sweetness.
- **Sugar** balances the salt.
- **Sesame oil** at the end for aroma (it burns if heated hard).
- **Acid** (lime, vinegar) brightens the dish.

STIR-FRY SAFETY

Stir-frying safely: the pan is very hot and oil spits, so keep your face back, use a long spoon or spatula and stand with a lid or damp cloth to hand to smother any flame. Have every ingredient ready before you start, because there is no time to chop once the pan is hot.

Hot oil: never leave a pan of hot oil unattended. If oil starts to smoke, take the pan off the heat and let it cool. Never put water on a pan fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or damp cloth, then get out of the room and call 999 if it spreads. Dry vegetables and noodles well, because water on hot oil spits.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Egg chow mein

25 minutes | 2 portions | stir-frying loose noodles with vegetables

The classic takeaway: egg noodles tossed in a hot pan with crunchy vegetables and a savoury sauce. Mix the sauce first and have everything within reach.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried egg noodles
2 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
2	garlic cloves, sliced
1	carrot, cut into matchsticks
150 g	white cabbage, shredded
3	spring onions, cut into 3 cm lengths
2 tbsp	light soy sauce
1 tbsp	dark soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil
2 tbsp	oyster sauce (optional; contains shellfish)

1. Cook the noodles for 1 minute less than the pack says, drain, rinse in cold water, drain very well and toss with 1 tsp of the oil so they don't stick.
2. Mix the soy sauces, sugar, sesame oil and oyster sauce (if using) in a small bowl.
3. Heat a large frying pan or wok over a high heat until it is very hot. Add the remaining oil, then the garlic and carrot and stir-fry for **1 minute**. Add the cabbage and stir-fry for 1 minute more.
4. Add the noodles and the spring onions and stir-fry for **1 to 2 minutes**, tossing so they heat through without breaking. Pour in the sauce and toss for 30 seconds until everything is coated. Serve at once.

> **HOT PAN**

Stir-frying safely: the pan is very hot and oil spits, so keep your face back, use a long spoon or spatula and stand with a lid or damp cloth to hand to smother any flame. Have every ingredient ready before you start, because there is no time to chop once the pan is hot.

Hot oil: never leave a pan of hot oil unattended. If oil starts to smoke, take the pan off the heat and let it cool. Never put water on a pan fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or damp cloth, then get out of the room and call 999 if it spreads. Dry vegetables and noodles well, because water on hot oil spits.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 1 · QUICK

Soy sauce noodles with greens

15 minutes | 2 portions | a simple sauce-and-greens stir-fry

The simplest stir-fry: noodles, garlic, greens and soy. A good template for any leftover vegetables.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried thin wheat or egg noodles
2	heads of pak choi, leaves separated
2	garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
1 tbsp	water

1. Cook the noodles, drain, rinse and toss with a few drops of oil. Mix the soy sauce, sugar and water.
2. Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a high heat. Add the garlic for 15 seconds, then the pak choi stalks and cook for 1 minute. Add the leaves and stir-fry for 30 seconds.
3. Add the noodles and the sauce and toss for 1 to 2 minutes until hot and glossy. Serve at once.

HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS

Stir-frying safely: the pan is very hot and oil spits, so keep your face back, use a long spoon or spatula and stand with a lid or damp cloth to hand to smother any flame. Have every ingredient ready before you start, because there is no time to chop once the pan is hot.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · SPICED

Singapore-style vermicelli

25 minutes | 2 portions | stir-frying delicate noodles with a spice

Thin rice noodles stir-fried with curry powder, egg, pepper and prawns or tofu. Rice vermicelli is delicate: soak rather than boil and toss gently.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

150 g	dried rice vermicelli
1 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
2	Lion-marked eggs, beaten
1	red pepper, thinly sliced
3	spring onions, sliced
100 g	cooked peeled prawns, or firm tofu cut into cubes
1 tbsp	mild curry powder
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
2 tbsp	water

1. Cover the vermicelli with just-boiled water and leave for the time on the pack (usually 3 to 5 minutes). Drain and shake dry. Mix the curry powder, soy sauce, sugar and water.
2. Heat half the oil in a large pan over a high heat. Add the eggs, stir quickly to scramble until just set (about 30 seconds) and tip out.
3. Heat the remaining oil. Add the pepper and stir-fry for 1 minute. Add the spring onions and prawns or tofu and stir-fry for 1 minute until hot through.
4. Add the noodles and the sauce and toss gently for 1 to 2 minutes until the noodles are coated and hot. Return the egg and toss once. Serve at once.

> **PRAWNS, EGGS AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Meat, prawns and eggs:** cook chicken until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices, prawns until pink and opaque, and eggs until set. Wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat or prawns, and keep raw meat away from the cooked food.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 3 · BALANCED SAUCE

A pad Thai-style noodle dish

35 minutes | 2 portions | balancing sour, salty and sweet in a stir-fry sauce

A home version of a Thai classic: flat rice noodles, tofu, egg and a tangy tamarind-lime sauce, finished with peanuts. The sauce is the point: taste it before it goes in the pan.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried flat rice noodles (5 mm wide)
2 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
2	Lion-marked eggs, beaten
200 g	firm tofu, pressed and cubed (or cooked peeled prawns)
3	spring onions, sliced
2	garlic cloves, sliced
2 tbsp	lime juice, plus wedges to serve
2 tbsp	fish sauce (or soy sauce for a vegetarian version)
2 tbsp	soft brown sugar
1 tbsp	tamarind paste, or an extra tbsp of lime juice
2 tbsp	roasted peanuts, crushed

1. Soak the noodles in warm (not boiling) water for 20 to 30 minutes until flexible but still firm. They finish cooking in the pan. Drain.
2. Stir the lime juice, fish sauce, sugar and tamarind together. Taste: it should be sour, salty and sweet in balance. Adjust.
3. Heat half the oil in a large pan over a high heat. Fry the tofu for 4 to 5 minutes until golden, add the garlic for 15 seconds and push to the side. Pour in the eggs and scramble until just set.
4. Add the remaining oil and the noodles, then the sauce. Toss for 2 to 3 minutes until the noodles are tender and have soaked up the sauce (add a splash of water if they are dry). Add the spring onions.
5. Serve at once, topped with peanuts and a lime wedge.

HOT PAN, EGGS AND ALLERGENS

Stir-frying safely: the pan is very hot and oil spits, so keep your face back, use a long spoon or spatula and stand with a lid or damp cloth to hand to smother any flame. Have every ingredient ready before you start, because there is no time to chop once the pan is hot.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Allergens: pad Thai-style dishes contain peanuts, egg, fish (fish sauce) and often shellfish; use soy sauce and tofu instead for a vegetarian, fish-free version. Check all labels.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Soaked or boiled

Rice noodles.

1. Make half of the pad Thai-style dish with noodles soaked in warm water and half with noodles boiled for 4 minutes. Cook both in the pan.

Look for: The soaked noodles stay intact and chewy. The boiled ones break up and go mushy once they hit the sauce.

EXPERIMENT

Pan heat

Hot or medium.

1. Stir-fry the same vegetables in a very hot pan and in a medium-heat pan.

Look for: The hot pan gives browned edges and a crisp-tender bite. The medium pan steams the vegetables until they are soft and pale.

EXPERIMENT

Sauce early or late

When the sauce goes in.

1. Cook two portions of soy sauce noodles: add the sauce at the start to one, and at the end to the other.

Look for: Early sauce boils away and the noodles stew. Late sauce coats the noodles and keeps them springy.

EXPERIMENT

Crowding

One batch or two.

1. Cook the chow mein vegetables in one large batch and then in two small batches.

Look for: The two small batches brown and stay crisp. The big batch steams and waters out.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Egg chow mein				
Soy sauce noodles with greens				
Singapore-style vermicelli				
Pad Thai-style noodles				
Soaked or boiled				
Pan heat				
Sauce early or late				
Crowding				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Noodles clump in the pan	Wet or not tossed with oil	Drain very well; toss with oil; use a hot pan
Soggy, watery stir-fry	Pan too cool or too full	Heat the pan hard; cook in batches
Noodles break up	Over-soaked, or stirred roughly	Soak less; toss with tongs or two spatulas
Bland dish	Not enough sauce or seasoning	Taste the sauce first; add soy, acid or sugar
Burnt garlic	Pan too hot or added too early	Add garlic for 15 seconds only, with other ingredients
Sticky, clumped rice noodles	Not oiled, or sat too long	Toss with a little oil after draining; stir-fry soon after

HOT PANS, COOKED-THROUGH FOOD AND ALLERGENS

Stir-frying safely: the pan is very hot and oil spits, so keep your face back, use a long spoon or spatula and stand with a lid or damp cloth to hand to smother any flame. Have every ingredient ready before you start, because there is no time to chop once the pan is hot.

Hot oil: never leave a pan of hot oil unattended. If oil starts to smoke, take the pan off the heat and let it cool. Never put water on a pan fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or damp cloth, then get out of the room and call 999 if it spreads. Dry vegetables and noodles well, because water on hot oil spits.

Meat, prawns and eggs: cook chicken until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices, prawns until pink and opaque, and eggs until set. Wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat or prawns, and keep raw meat away from the cooked food.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Leftovers: cool noodle dishes quickly (within about 1 hour), keep them covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** (soups with meat or egg: 2 days, with the noodles stored separately), and reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can prepare noodles for a stir-fry and keep them loose.

☐ I use a very hot pan and cook in small batches.

☐ I add the sauce last and toss.

☐ I can balance a sauce before it goes in the pan.

☐ I cook chicken, prawns and eggs through.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 3 is Noodle Soups: broth first, noodles cooked separately.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 3 · Noodle Soups

SKILL GOAL

Make a good broth, cook noodles apart and build a bowl in layers.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A noodle soup has three parts: **a good broth, well-cooked noodles and toppings that add flavour and texture.** The broth does most of the work, so taste it carefully and season it until it is delicious before anything goes in it.

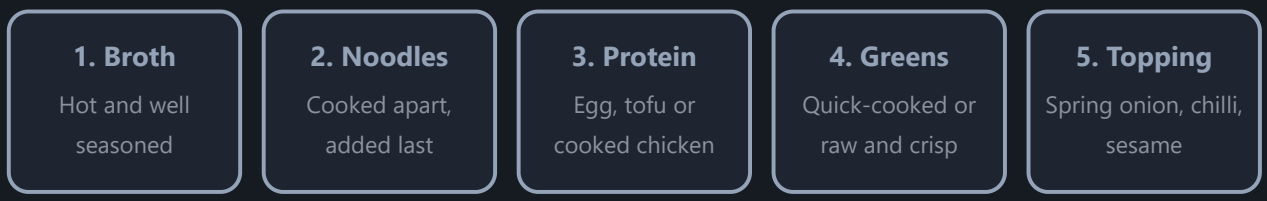


Figure 3. Build a noodle soup bowl in layers. Cooking the noodles apart keeps the broth clear and the noodles springy.

The broth

- **Stock:** homemade is best, but a good stock cube or liquid stock works. Dilute it a little less than the pack says, because the noodles and toppings will dilute it further.
- **Aromatics:** ginger, garlic and spring onion simmered in the stock add depth.
- **Seasoning:** soy sauce for salt and savouriness, a splash of rice vinegar or lime for brightness, a drop of sesame oil at the end for aroma.
- **Very hot:** noodle soup cools fast: bring the broth to a boil just before serving and warm the bowls.

Noodles in soup

- **Cook them separately** in plenty of water, then add them to the bowl. In the soup pot, they cloud the broth and go soft.
- **Cook them a little less:** the hot broth keeps cooking them.
- **Add them to the bowl last,** just before pouring in the broth.
- **Eat promptly:** noodles get swollen and soft if the soup sits.

Toppings

TOPPING	ADDS
Soft-boiled egg	Richness and creaminess
Tofu, cooked chicken or prawns	Protein
Spinach, pak choi, mushrooms	Fresh vegetables, quick-cooked in the broth
Spring onion, coriander	Freshness and colour
Sweetcorn, nori	Sweetness and savour
Chilli oil, sesame oil, lime	Heat, aroma and acid

HOT SOUP AND LEFTOVERS

Hot soup: a ladle of boiling broth causes a serious scald. Keep pan handles turned in, ladle into bowls on a stable surface away from the edge, carry bowls with both hands and let children's bowls cool first. Noodles hold heat, so blow on them before eating.

Leftover soup: take the noodles out of the broth if you can, because they go soft and swollen as they sit. Cool the broth quickly (within about 1 hour), keep it covered in the fridge, eat within **2 days**, and reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, once only. Cooked noodles keep 1 day.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A quick chicken noodle soup

25 minutes | 2 big portions | making a soup around separately cooked noodles

A real chicken noodle soup in 25 minutes, using stock and cooked chicken. Cook the noodles in a separate pan: they release starch that clouds the broth if cooked in it.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1 litre	chicken stock (made with 2 stock cubes or home-made)
1	carrot, thinly sliced
1	celery stick, thinly sliced
1 slice	fresh ginger (about 1 cm)
150 g	dried thin egg noodles
150 g	cooked chicken, shredded
2	spring onions, sliced
1 tbsp	soy sauce, or to taste
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Bring the stock to a simmer in a pan with the carrot, celery and ginger. Simmer for 8 to 10 minutes until the vegetables are tender.
2. Meanwhile, cook the noodles in a separate pan of boiling water for 3 to 4 minutes. Drain.
3. Add the chicken to the stock and heat until it is **steaming hot all the way through** (about 5 minutes). Taste and season with soy sauce and pepper. Lift out the ginger.
4. Divide the noodles between two bowls, ladle over the hot soup and top with the spring onions.

> **HOT SOUP, COOKED CHICKEN AND LEFTOVERS**
>
> **Hot soup:** a ladle of boiling broth causes a serious scald. Keep pan handles turned in, ladle into bowls on a stable surface away from the edge, carry bowls with both hands and let children's bowls cool first. Noodles hold heat, so blow on them before eating.
>
> **Cooked chicken:** use chicken that was cooked and chilled promptly (within 1 to 2 hours), kept

in the fridge and eaten within 2 days of cooking, and reheat it until steaming hot.

Leftover soup: take the noodles out of the broth if you can, because they go soft and swollen as they sit. Cool the broth quickly (within about 1 hour), keep it covered in the fridge, eat within **2 days**, and reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, once only. Cooked noodles keep 1 day.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · MISO

Miso noodle soup

20 minutes | 2 portions | using miso without boiling it

Miso gives a savoury, salty depth for almost no effort. The rule is simple: stir it in at the end, off the boil.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

800 ml	vegetable stock
150 g	udon noodles (dried or fresh), or soba
100 g	mushrooms, sliced
100 g	firm tofu, cut into small cubes
1 handful	baby spinach
3 tbsp	white miso paste
2	spring onions, sliced
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water for the time on the pack, drain and rinse briefly.
2. Simmer the stock with the mushrooms for 5 minutes. Add the tofu and spinach and cook for 1 minute.
3. Take the pan off the heat. Put the miso in a ladle, add a little hot stock, stir until smooth and stir it into the pan. Don't boil the soup again.
4. Divide the noodles between bowls, ladle over the soup and top with the spring onions and a drop of sesame oil.

MISO, HOT SOUP AND ALLERGENS

Miso: stir miso in off the heat or when the soup is barely simmering: boiling spoils the flavour. Miso is very salty, so taste before adding more soy sauce. Some miso and dashi contain fish or are made with barley, so check the label.

Hot soup: a ladle of boiling broth causes a serious scald. Keep pan handles turned in, ladle into bowls on a stable surface away from the edge, carry bowls with both hands and let children's bowls cool first. Noodles hold heat, so blow on them before eating.

> **Allergens:** most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · THE BOWL

A ramen-style bowl with a soft egg

35 minutes | 2 portions | timing an egg and building a full bowl

A fast, flavour-packed bowl: gingery broth, springy noodles, a jammy egg and fresh toppings. The soft egg is cooked for a set time then cooled in cold water.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1 litre	chicken or vegetable stock
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1	garlic clove, crushed
1 slice	fresh ginger
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil
200 g	ramen or egg noodles
2	Lion-marked eggs
2 handfuls	spinach or pak choi
2 tbsp	sweetcorn
2	spring onions, sliced
1	nori sheet, torn (optional)
1 tsp	chilli oil (optional)

1. **The eggs:** lower the eggs gently into a pan of boiling water and cook for **6 and a half minutes** (for a jammy yolk) or 10 minutes (solid). Move to a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes, then peel.
2. **The broth:** simmer the stock with the soy sauce, garlic, ginger and sesame oil for 10 minutes. Taste and adjust.
3. **The noodles:** cook in a separate pan for the pack time, adding the greens for the last 30 seconds. Drain.
4. Divide the noodles and greens between two bowls, ladle over the very hot broth and top with the halved eggs, sweetcorn, spring onions, nori and chilli oil.

EGGS, HOT SOUP AND ALLERGENS

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Hot soup: a ladle of boiling broth causes a serious scald. Keep pan handles turned in, ladle into bowls on a stable surface away from the edge, carry bowls with both hands and let children's bowls cool first. Noodles hold heat, so blow on them before eating.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 3 · COCONUT CURRY

Coconut curry noodle soup (laksa-style)

35 minutes | 3 portions | frying a paste and building a rich broth

A creamy, spicy, fragrant soup. The curry paste is fried first to bring out its flavour. Add the noodles to the bowl, not the pot, so the broth stays rich.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

2 tbsp	Thai red or yellow curry paste (check the label for shrimp and fish)
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
400 ml	tin of coconut milk
500 ml	vegetable stock
1	red pepper, thinly sliced
150 g	dried rice vermicelli
200 g	firm tofu, cubed, or cooked chicken
1 handful	spinach
1	lime, juice and wedges
1 handful	fresh coriander

1. Heat the oil in a large pan and fry the curry paste over a medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes until fragrant.
2. Add the coconut milk and stock, stirring, and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Add the pepper and tofu (or cooked chicken) and simmer for another 5 minutes, until hot through.
3. Soak or cook the vermicelli as the pack says in a separate pan or bowl, and drain.
4. Stir the spinach and lime juice into the soup. Divide the noodles between bowls, ladle over the soup and top with coriander and lime wedges.

> **CURRY PASTE, HOT SOUP AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Hot soup:** a ladle of boiling broth causes a serious scald. Keep pan handles turned in, ladle into bowls on a stable surface away from the edge, carry bowls with both hands and let children's bowls cool first. Noodles hold heat, so blow on them before eating.

> **Allergens:** many curry pastes contain shrimp paste (shellfish) and fish; check the label. Coconut is classed as a tree nut by some allergy guidance, so check with anyone who has a nut allergy.
>
> **Leftover soup:** take the noodles out of the broth if you can, because they go soft and swollen as they sit. Cool the broth quickly (within about 1 hour), keep it covered in the fridge, eat within **2 days**, and reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, once only. Cooked noodles keep 1 day.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Noodles in or out of the broth

Cooked in the soup pot or apart.

1. Make two portions of chicken noodle soup: cook the noodles in the broth for one and in a separate pan for the other.

Look for: The noodles cooked in the broth cloud it with starch and turn soft. The separately cooked noodles keep the broth clear and stay springy.

EXPERIMENT

Broth strength

One stock cube or two.

1. Make two small pots of broth with the same water, one using one stock cube per litre and one using two.

Look for: The stronger broth tastes richer but is saltier, and once the noodles go in it tastes just right. The weaker one can taste thin. Taste before you season.

EXPERIMENT

Egg timing

5, 6 and a half and 10 minutes.

1. Boil three eggs for 5, 6 and a half, and 10 minutes, cool in cold water, peel and cut in half.

Look for: At 5 minutes the yolk is liquid, at 6 and a half jammy, at 10 solid. Cook solid if you are unsure about runny eggs.

EXPERIMENT

Toppings early or late

Greens in the broth or on top.

1. Cook spinach in the broth for 1 minute in one bowl and add it raw to the hot bowl in another.

Look for: The cooked greens are softer and milder; the raw ones stay bright and fresh but wilt in the hot broth.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Chicken noodle soup				
Miso noodle soup				
Ramen-style bowl				
Coconut curry noodle soup				
Noodles in or out				
Broth strength				
Egg timing				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Toppings early or late				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Cloudy, starchy broth	Noodles cooked in the soup	Cook noodles separately
Mushy noodles	Overcooked or left in the broth	Cook a little less; add at the last moment
Bland broth	Weak stock or no seasoning	Simmer with aromatics; season with soy and a little vinegar or lime
Too salty	Strong stock and miso or soy	Dilute with water; use less soy; taste first
Boiled miso tastes dull	Boiled after adding	Stir in off the heat
Curry broth splits	Boiled too hard	Simmer gently

HOT SOUP, MISO, EGGS AND ALLERGENS

Hot soup: a ladle of boiling broth causes a serious scald. Keep pan handles turned in, ladle into bowls on a stable surface away from the edge, carry bowls with both hands and let children's bowls cool first. Noodles hold heat, so blow on them before eating.

Miso: stir miso in off the heat or when the soup is barely simmering: boiling spoils the flavour. Miso is very salty, so taste before adding more soy sauce. Some miso and dashi contain fish or are made with barley, so check the label.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you

share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Leftover soup: take the noodles out of the broth if you can, because they go soft and swollen as they sit. Cool the broth quickly (within about 1 hour), keep it covered in the fridge, eat within **2 days**, and reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, once only. Cooked noodles keep 1 day.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can make a broth and season it well.

☐ I cook noodles separately and add them last.

☐ I can build a bowl in layers.

☐ I can time a soft-boiled egg.

☐ I handle hot soup and leftovers safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 4 is Cold Noodle Salads: cooling noodles quickly and dressing them well.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 4 · Cold Noodle Salads

SKILL GOAL

Cool noodles quickly and dress them well, so cold noodle dishes are springy, flavourful and safe to keep.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A good cold noodle dish has noodles that are **springy, loose and well flavoured**, not gluey, clumped or watery. Almost all of that comes from how you cool and drain them. This chapter covers the cooling method and then four cold dishes, from a toss-and-serve salad to a dipping bowl.

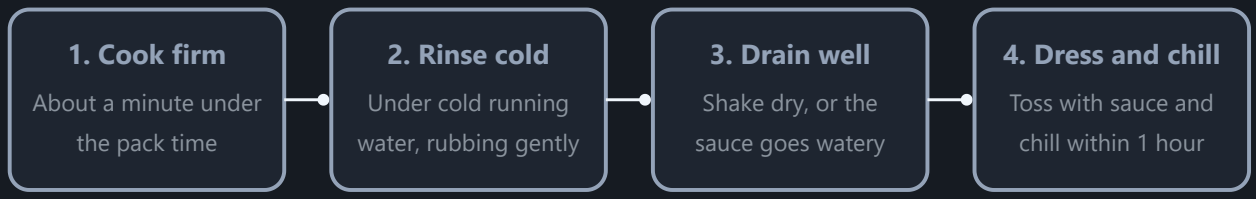


Figure 4. Cold noodles in four steps. Rinsing removes the surface starch that makes noodles gummy, and draining stops the sauce going thin.

Choosing noodles for cold dishes

NOODLE	PACK TIME (ABOUT)	BEST FOR	NOTES
Thin egg or wheat noodles	2 to 4 minutes	Tossed sesame and peanut salads	Rinse well; keep a little firm
Soba (buckwheat)	4 to 5 minutes	Dipping bowls	Rub under cold water; usually contains some wheat

NOODLE	PACK TIME (ABOUT)	BEST FOR	NOTES
Somen (very thin wheat)	2 to 3 minutes	Light dipping bowls and soups	Cook fast; they get soft quickly
Rice vermicelli	Soak 3 to 5 minutes in boiling water	Herb bowls	Delicate; rinse and drain very well
Glass (cellophane) noodles	Soak in hot water 5 to 10 minutes	Light salads	Cut with scissors; slippery

Cooking times differ between brands, so follow the pack and use the times here only as a guide.

The cold-noodle method

1. **Plenty of boiling water** and a good stir at the start, so the noodles don't stick.
2. **Cook about a minute under the pack time:** the noodles keep softening a little as they sit in the dressing.
3. **Rinse under cold running water**, rubbing gently with your hands. This stops the cooking and washes off the surface starch that makes noodles gummy.
4. **Drain very well** (shake them in a colander, or press with a clean cloth). Wet noodles dilute the sauce.
5. **A drop of oil** (sesame or vegetable) stops them clumping if you aren't dressing them straight away.
6. **Dress, then chill:** into the fridge within about an hour.

COLD DISHES AND BOILING WATER

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Rinsing hot noodles under cold water makes steam, so keep your hands clear until it dies down.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Sesame noodle salad

20 minutes | 2 portions | cooking, cooling and dressing noodles

The simplest cold noodle dish: noodles tossed with a soy and sesame dressing and crunchy vegetables. Stir the dressing before you start so the sugar dissolves.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried egg or thin wheat noodles
1	carrot, cut into matchsticks
½	cucumber, cut into matchsticks
2	spring onions, thinly sliced
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil
1 tbsp	rice vinegar
1 tsp	sugar
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger
1	small garlic clove, crushed
1 tbsp	sesame seeds, toasted

1. Whisk the soy sauce, sesame oil, vinegar, sugar, ginger and garlic in a large bowl until the sugar dissolves.
2. Cook the noodles in plenty of boiling water for about **1 minute less than the pack says**, so they stay firm. Drain, then rinse under cold running water, rubbing gently, until completely cold. Shake well to drain.
3. Add the noodles to the dressing and toss until every strand is coated. Add the carrot, cucumber and most of the spring onions and toss again.
4. Scatter with the sesame seeds and the rest of the spring onions. Serve at once, or cover and chill within an hour.

> **BOILING WATER, KNIVES AND COLD DISHES**

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Rinsing hot noodles under cold water makes steam, so keep your hands clear until it dies down.

Knife safety: cut on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath), tuck your guiding fingertips back (the claw), and cut round vegetables like cucumber on a flat face so they can't roll. Cooking Skills: Knife Skills 1 covers this.

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

Allergens: these dishes contain wheat (gluten) in most noodles and soy sauce, plus sesame, soy and (in some) peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and egg (egg noodles). Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · DIPPING

Soba with a dipping sauce

25 minutes | 2 portions | rinsing and rubbing noodles, and serving them chilled with a dip

Cold soba is eaten dipped in a savoury sauce rather than tossed in it. The noodles are rinsed and rubbed hard to remove the sticky starch. The sauce here has no mirin or sake.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	soba (buckwheat) noodles
150 ml	vegetable stock or dashi, cooled
3 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tsp	rice vinegar
2	spring onions, finely sliced
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger
1	sheet of nori, cut into thin strips (optional)

1. Mix the stock, soy sauce, sugar and vinegar in a small pan, bring to the boil to dissolve the sugar and cool completely, then chill. (Dashi powder and some stock cubes contain fish: use kombu or a vegetable stock for a vegetarian version.)
2. Cook the soba in plenty of boiling water for **4 to 5 minutes**, or as the pack says, stirring so they don't stick. Drain and rinse in a bowl of cold water, rubbing the noodles between your hands and changing the water 2 or 3 times until it runs clear, then drain very well.
3. Pile the noodles on two plates (a chilled plate keeps them cold), scatter with nori, and put the dipping sauce in small bowls with the spring onions and ginger beside them.
4. To eat, stir the spring onion and ginger into the sauce, lift a few noodles and dip.

> **GLUTEN, BOILING WATER AND COLD DISHES**
>
> **Allergens:** these dishes contain wheat (gluten) in most noodles and soy sauce, plus sesame, soy and (in some) peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and egg (egg noodles). Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Rinsing hot noodles under cold water makes steam, so keep your hands clear until it dies down.

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

LEVEL 2 · BOWL

A vermicelli herb bowl

30 minutes | 2 portions | building a cold bowl with a sweet-sour-salty dressing

A fresh Vietnamese-style bowl: cool noodles, crunchy vegetables, plenty of herbs and a bright dressing. Build it in layers, noodles in the middle and the dressing at the end.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

150 g	rice vermicelli
½	cucumber, cut into matchsticks
1	carrot, grated or cut into matchsticks
1 handful	lettuce, shredded
1 handful	fresh mint and coriander leaves
200 g	firm tofu, pressed, cut into strips and pan-fried until golden
1 tbsp	vegetable oil, for frying
2 tbsp	roasted peanuts, crushed
3 tbsp	lime juice, for the dressing
2 tbsp	fish sauce (or soy sauce for a vegetarian bowl), for the dressing
2 tbsp	sugar, for the dressing
4 tbsp	water, for the dressing
1	small garlic clove, crushed, and a little chopped red chilli, for the dressing

1. Make the dressing: stir the lime juice, fish sauce, sugar, water, garlic and chilli together until the sugar dissolves. Taste: it should be sweet, sour and salty in balance.
2. Cover the vermicelli with boiling water in a bowl and leave for the time on the pack (usually 3 to 5 minutes) until tender. Drain, rinse in cold water and drain very well.
3. Pat the tofu dry. Fry it in the oil over a medium-high heat for 8 to 10 minutes, turning, until golden on all sides.
4. Divide the noodles between two bowls. Arrange the lettuce, cucumber, carrot, herbs and tofu on top, scatter with the peanuts and pour over the dressing at the table.

HOT OIL, RAW VEGETABLES AND ALLERGENS

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

Bean sprouts: raw sprouts can carry bacteria, and the NHS advises pregnant women and other vulnerable people to cook them thoroughly until steaming hot. I have left them out of the raw salads here: use shredded cabbage or lettuce for crunch.

Allergens: peanuts, soy (tofu) and fish (fish sauce). Use soy sauce in the dressing for a vegetarian or fish-free bowl.

LEVEL 3 · SAUCE

Peanut noodle salad

25 minutes | 3 portions | making a smooth, pourable peanut sauce

A rich peanut dressing over cold noodles and crunchy vegetables. The sauce thickens as it sits, so thin it with warm water until it flows. Chapter 5 of this course goes deeper into sauces.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried egg or wheat noodles
3 tbsp	smooth peanut butter
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	rice vinegar
1 tbsp	honey or sugar
1 tsp	chilli sauce, or to taste
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger
4 tbsp	warm water, to thin
¼	red cabbage, finely shredded
1	red pepper, thinly sliced
1 handful	fresh coriander
2 tbsp	roasted peanuts, crushed

1. Whisk the peanut butter, soy sauce, vinegar, honey, chilli sauce and ginger in a bowl, adding the warm water a spoonful at a time until the sauce is smooth and pourable like double cream.
2. Cook, rinse and drain the noodles as in the sesame noodle salad (about 1 minute under the pack time).
3. Toss the noodles with the sauce, adding more warm water if it is thick. Add the cabbage, pepper and coriander and toss lightly.
4. Top with peanuts and serve at once, or chill within an hour.

PEANUT ALLERGY AND COLD DISHES

Peanuts and sesame: peanuts and sesame are common allergens, and a tiny trace can cause a serious reaction. Check labels, keep them away from anyone who is allergic, and label any dish you share. Peanut butter can usually be swapped for a nut-free seed butter, but check that too.

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

Allergens: these dishes contain wheat (gluten) in most noodles and soy sauce, plus sesame, soy and (in some) peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and egg (egg noodles). Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Rinsing

Cold, warm or not at all.

1. Cook three small portions of thin noodles. Rinse one under cold running water, one under warm water, and leave one unrinsed. Toss each with a little oil and compare after 10 minutes.

Look for: The cold-rinsed noodles are loose and springy. The warm-rinsed ones are softer. The unrinsed ones clump into a gummy block.

EXPERIMENT

Dress now or later

How long the sauce sits.

1. Dress half of a batch of sesame noodles straight away. Dress the other half after 2 hours in the fridge, keeping the sauce separate.

Look for: The noodles dressed early absorb the sauce and may clump and taste flat. The late-dressed noodles stay springy and the sauce tastes fresher.

EXPERIMENT

Fridge time

Fresh, 2 hours and next day.

1. Keep a portion of dressed noodles in the fridge and taste after 2 hours and after a day.

Look for: The noodles firm up in the fridge and the flavours blend. After a day the texture is noticeably tougher: cold noodle dishes are best the same day. Don't keep them longer than 1 day.

EXPERIMENT

Noodle type

Egg, soba or rice.

1. Dress three small portions of egg noodles, soba and rice vermicelli with the same sesame dressing.

Look for: Egg noodles are springy and rich, soba is earthy and slightly grainy, rice vermicelli is soft and delicate and absorbs the dressing more.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Sesame noodle salad				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Soba with dipping sauce				
Vermicelli herb bowl				
Peanut noodle salad				
Rinsing				
Dress now or later				
Fridge time				
Noodle type				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Noodles clump together	Not rinsed, or left too long undressed	Rinse well under cold water; toss with a little oil
Noodles mushy	Overcooked, or not rinsed quickly	Cook a minute under the pack time; rinse straight away
Sauce watery	Noodles not drained	Shake or press dry before dressing
Peanut sauce too thick	It thickens as it stands	Thin with warm water a spoonful at a time
Flat flavour	Under-seasoned, or dressed too early	Taste before serving; add soy, vinegar or lime; dress late
Soba tastes gluey	Not rubbed under cold water	Rinse and rub in several changes of cold water

COLD DISHES, KNIVES, ALLERGENS AND BOILING WATER

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety

guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

Knife safety: cut on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath), tuck your guiding fingertips back (the claw), and cut round vegetables like cucumber on a flat face so they can't roll. Cooking Skills: Knife Skills 1 covers this.

Allergens: these dishes contain wheat (gluten) in most noodles and soy sauce, plus sesame, soy and (in some) peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and egg (egg noodles). Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

Peanuts and sesame: peanuts and sesame are common allergens, and a tiny trace can cause a serious reaction. Check labels, keep them away from anyone who is allergic, and label any dish you share. Peanut butter can usually be swapped for a nut-free seed butter, but check that too.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Rinsing hot noodles under cold water makes steam, so keep your hands clear until it dies down.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can cook noodles firm, rinse them cold and drain them well.

☐ I can dress noodles so they stay loose and flavourful.

☐ I can build a cold noodle bowl with a balanced dressing.

☐ I know how long cold noodle dishes can safely stay out and in the fridge.

☐ I check for peanut, sesame, wheat and fish allergens.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 5 is Sesame, Peanut and Chilli Sauces: balancing salty, sweet, sour, nutty and hot.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 5 · Sesame, Peanut and Chilli Sauces

SKILL GOAL

Balance salty, sweet, sour, nutty and hot in a noodle sauce, and handle hot oil and fresh ingredients safely.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A noodle sauce does the seasoning, so it has to be **balanced**. Most good noodle sauces combine five things: salty, sweet, sour, nutty and hot. If a sauce tastes flat, something is missing: if it tastes harsh, something is too strong. This chapter teaches you to taste and fix.



Figure 5. Five flavours to balance. Taste the sauce on a spoon of plain noodle and fix whichever is missing.

Taste and fix

IF IT TASTES...	ADD
Harsh or too salty	A little sugar, or water, or something nutty
Flat or dull	Rice vinegar or lime juice, and a pinch of salt
Too sharp or sour	Sugar or honey
Thin and watery	More tahini or peanut butter, or let it stand

IF IT TASTES...	ADD
Too thick	Warm water or noodle cooking water, a spoonful at a time
Not hot enough	Chilli sauce, chilli flakes or a little chilli oil

Sauce tips

- **Taste on a noodle:** a sauce tastes saltier on its own than on plain noodles.
- **Thin with warm water or noodle cooking water:** the starch in the cooking water helps the sauce cling.
- **Toast sesame seeds** in a dry pan for 2 minutes until golden for a deeper flavour.
- **Use toasted sesame oil as a finishing oil,** not for frying: it burns easily.
- **Dress the noodles while they are hot** (for hot dishes) so they absorb the flavour.

HOT OIL, FRESH INGREDIENTS AND ALLERGENS

Pouring hot oil: this is the most dangerous step in the course. Use a deep, dry, heatproof metal or ceramic bowl (not thin glass, which can crack, and never a damp bowl, because water on hot oil makes it spit violently). Heat the oil only until it shimmers, pour slowly with your face and arms well back, wear long sleeves, keep children and pets out of the room, and leave it to cool completely before you taste or bottle it. If oil smokes, take it off the heat. Never put water on an oil fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or a damp cloth.

Keeping sauces: sauces made with fresh garlic, ginger or spring onion should be covered and kept in the fridge, and eaten within about **2 to 3 days**. Never keep a homemade oil with fresh garlic or herbs at room temperature, because it can grow dangerous bacteria. The chilli oil here uses only dried ingredients; keep it in the fridge too and use it within about 2 weeks. These times are cautious general guidance, not an official rule for these sauces.

Peanuts and sesame: peanuts and sesame are common allergens, and a tiny trace can cause a serious reaction. Check labels, keep them away from anyone who is allergic and label any dish or sauce you share.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Soy-sesame sauce

10 minutes | enough for 2 portions of noodles | balancing salty, sweet, sour and nutty

The base of dozens of noodle dishes. Stir it together, taste it on a spoon of noodles and adjust: more sugar if it is harsh, more vinegar if it is flat.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

3 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil
1 tbsp	rice vinegar
2 tsp	sugar
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger
1	small garlic clove, crushed
200 g	cooked noodles, to dress the sauce (about 75 g dried)

1. Stir the soy sauce, sesame oil, vinegar, sugar, ginger and garlic together until the sugar dissolves.
2. Taste a little on a cooked noodle, not off the spoon, because the noodle softens the saltiness. Add more sugar, vinegar or sesame oil to taste.
3. Toss with the hot or cold noodles and serve. Keep any leftover sauce covered in the fridge.

> **FRESH GARLIC AND GINGER, AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Keeping sauces:** sauces made with fresh garlic, ginger or spring onion should be covered and kept in the fridge, and eaten within about **2 to 3 days**. Never keep a homemade oil with fresh garlic or herbs at room temperature, because it can grow dangerous bacteria. The chilli oil here uses only dried ingredients; keep it in the fridge too and use it within about 2 weeks. These times are cautious general guidance, not an official rule for these sauces.
>
> **Allergens:** soy sauce contains soy and wheat. Sesame, tahini, peanut butter and (in some sauces) fish sauce are common allergens. Check every label.

LEVEL 2 · CREAMY

Peanut sauce

10 minutes | enough for 3 portions of noodles | making a smooth, pourable nut sauce

A thick peanut butter turned into a silky sauce with warm water. It also makes a good dip for vegetables and skewers. Add the water slowly: it looks split, then comes together.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

4 tbsp	smooth peanut butter
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	lime juice
1 tbsp	honey or sugar
1 tsp	chilli sauce, or to taste
1	small garlic clove, crushed
100 ml	warm water (or coconut milk)

1. Put the peanut butter in a bowl with the soy sauce, lime juice, honey, chilli sauce and garlic and stir to a stiff paste.
2. Add the warm water a spoonful at a time, whisking, until the sauce is smooth and pours like double cream. It thickens as it stands, so thin it again with warm water.
3. Taste and adjust with more lime, honey or chilli. Toss with noodles, or use as a dip.

PEANUT ALLERGY AND KEEPING

Peanuts and sesame: peanuts and sesame are common allergens, and a tiny trace can cause a serious reaction. Check labels, keep them away from anyone who is allergic and label any dish or sauce you share.

Keeping sauces: sauces made with fresh garlic, ginger or spring onion should be covered and kept in the fridge, and eaten within about **2 to 3 days**. Never keep a homemade oil with fresh garlic or herbs at room temperature, because it can grow dangerous bacteria. The chilli oil here uses only dried ingredients; keep it in the fridge too and use it within about 2 weeks. These times are cautious general guidance, not an official rule for these sauces.

LEVEL 3 · HOT OIL

Chilli oil

20 minutes plus cooling | about 200 ml | pouring hot oil over dried spices safely

A fragrant, crunchy chilli oil to spoon over noodles, eggs and dumplings. Dried ingredients only: no fresh garlic. Read the safety box first and take it slowly.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

4 tbsp	mild chilli flakes
1 tsp	sugar
1 tsp	salt
2 tbsp	sesame seeds
1	star anise (optional)
200 ml	neutral oil (sunflower or vegetable)

1. Put the chilli flakes, sugar, salt and sesame seeds in a deep, dry, heatproof metal or ceramic bowl.
2. Heat the oil with the star anise in a small pan over a medium heat until it shimmers (about 2 to 3 minutes). It is ready when a single chilli flake dropped in sizzles gently: if it smokes, it is too hot, so take it off the heat and wait a minute.
3. Lift out the star anise. Pour about a third of the oil slowly over the chilli flakes: it will sizzle and foam. Stir with a long metal spoon, then add the rest.
4. Leave to cool completely, uncovered, for 1 to 2 hours. Spoon into a clean, dry jar and keep in the fridge for up to about 2 weeks.

POURING HOT OIL

Pouring hot oil: this is the most dangerous step in the course. Use a deep, dry, heatproof metal or ceramic bowl (not thin glass, which can crack, and never a damp bowl, because water on hot oil makes it spit violently). Heat the oil only until it shimmers, pour slowly with your face and arms well back, wear long sleeves, keep children and pets out of the room, and leave it to cool completely before you taste or bottle it. If oil smokes, take it off the heat. Never put water on an oil fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or a damp cloth.

Chillies: wash your hands thoroughly after handling chillies or chilli flakes and don't touch your

eyes or face. Wear gloves for very hot chillies. Chilli oil is very hot: taste a drop first.

Keeping sauces: sauces made with fresh garlic, ginger or spring onion should be covered and kept in the fridge, and eaten within about **2 to 3 days**. Never keep a homemade oil with fresh garlic or herbs at room temperature, because it can grow dangerous bacteria. The chilli oil here uses only dried ingredients; keep it in the fridge too and use it within about 2 weeks. These times are cautious general guidance, not an official rule for these sauces.

LEVEL 3 · FRESH

Ginger and spring onion sauce

15 minutes | enough for 3 portions of noodles | flavouring with raw aromatics and a splash of hot oil

A bright, savoury Cantonese-style sauce: raw ginger and spring onion lightly cooked by hot oil. It is wonderful over plain noodles, rice and steamed fish or chicken.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

6	spring onions, very finely chopped
3 tbsp	fresh ginger, finely grated
½ tsp	fine salt
4 tbsp	neutral oil
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	rice vinegar (optional)

1. Mix the spring onions, ginger and salt in a heatproof metal or ceramic bowl.
2. Heat the oil in a small pan until it shimmers. Pour it over the spring onion mixture: it will sizzle. Stir in the soy sauce and vinegar and leave for 10 minutes.
3. Taste and add more salt or soy sauce if needed. Spoon over hot noodles. Keep covered in the fridge and use within 2 days.

HOT OIL AND FRESH INGREDIENTS

Pouring hot oil: this is the most dangerous step in the course. Use a deep, dry, heatproof metal or ceramic bowl (not thin glass, which can crack, and never a damp bowl, because water on hot oil makes it spit violently). Heat the oil only until it shimmers, pour slowly with your face and arms well back, wear long sleeves, keep children and pets out of the room, and leave it to cool completely before you taste or bottle it. If oil smokes, take it off the heat. Never put water on an oil fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or a damp cloth.

Keeping sauces: sauces made with fresh garlic, ginger or spring onion should be covered and kept in the fridge, and eaten within about **2 to 3 days**. Never keep a homemade oil with fresh garlic or herbs at room temperature, because it can grow dangerous bacteria. The chilli oil here uses only dried ingredients; keep it in the fridge too and use it within about 2 weeks. These times are cautious general guidance, not an official rule for these sauces.

> **Allergens:** soy sauce contains soy and wheat. Sesame, tahini, peanut butter and (in some sauces) fish sauce are common allergens. Check every label.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Sweet and sour

Balancing the sauce.

1. Make the soy-sesame sauce three ways: with no sugar, as written, and with double the sugar. Taste each on a plain noodle.

Look for: No sugar tastes sharp and harsh. The written version is balanced. Double sugar tastes sweet and sticky. This is the balance you are learning to judge.

EXPERIMENT

Noodle water or plain water

Thinning the sauce.

1. Thin the peanut sauce with cooking water from the noodles in one bowl and with plain warm water in another. Toss each with noodles.

Look for: The noodle water sauce clings to the noodles better and tastes more cohesive. The plain water sauce can slide off.

EXPERIMENT

Toasted or untoasted

Sesame seeds.

1. Toast half of your sesame seeds in a dry pan for 2 minutes. Sprinkle each half on noodles and compare.

Look for: The toasted seeds are nuttier, more aromatic and crunchier. The untoasted ones taste pale and bland.

EXPERIMENT

Heat level

Little, medium and lots.

1. Make three small portions of peanut sauce with 1/2 tsp, 1 tsp and 2 tsp of chilli sauce. Taste each (with a glass of milk handy).

Look for: Note the level you like. Heat builds as you eat, so a sauce that tastes mild at the first bite can be hot by the last.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Soy-sesame sauce				
Peanut sauce				
Chilli oil				
Ginger and spring onion sauce				
Sweet and sour				
Noodle water or plain water				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Toasted or untoasted				
Heat level				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce too salty	Too much soy or miso	Add sugar, a splash of water and something nutty; use less next time
Peanut sauce stiff or split	Not enough water, or added too fast	Whisk in warm water a spoonful at a time
Sauce slides off the noodles	Wet noodles or thin sauce	Drain well; use a little cooking water; thicken with more paste
Chilli oil bitter	Oil too hot, flakes burnt	Pour at the shimmer, not smoking; use a cooler oil
Garlic tastes harsh	Raw garlic too strong	Use less, or soften it briefly in warm oil
Sauce tastes flat	Missing acid or salt	Add vinegar or lime; a pinch of salt

HOT OIL, CHILLIES, ALLERGENS AND KEEPING

Pouring hot oil: this is the most dangerous step in the course. Use a deep, dry, heatproof metal or ceramic bowl (not thin glass, which can crack, and never a damp bowl, because water on hot oil makes it spit violently). Heat the oil only until it shimmers, pour slowly with your face and arms well back, wear long sleeves, keep children and pets out of the room, and leave it to cool completely before you taste or bottle it. If oil smokes, take it off the heat. Never put water on an oil fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or a damp cloth.

Chillies: wash your hands thoroughly after handling chillies or chilli flakes and don't touch your eyes or face. Wear gloves for very hot chillies. Chilli oil is very hot: taste a drop first.

Keeping sauces: sauces made with fresh garlic, ginger or spring onion should be covered and kept in the fridge, and eaten within about **2 to 3 days**. Never keep a homemade oil with fresh garlic or herbs at room temperature, because it can grow dangerous bacteria. The chilli oil here uses only dried ingredients; keep it in the fridge too and use it within about 2 weeks. These times are cautious general

guidance, not an official rule for these sauces.

Peanuts and sesame: peanuts and sesame are common allergens, and a tiny trace can cause a serious reaction. Check labels, keep them away from anyone who is allergic and label any dish or sauce you share.

Allergens: soy sauce contains soy and wheat. Sesame, tahini, peanut butter and (in some sauces) fish sauce are common allergens. Check every label.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can balance a sauce across salty, sweet, sour, nutty and hot.

☐ I taste a sauce on a noodle and fix what is missing.

☐ I can thin a thick sauce with noodle water.

☐ I can pour hot oil over spices safely.

☐ I keep fresh-ingredient sauces in the fridge and use them quickly.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 6 is Handmade Noodles: mixing, resting and cutting noodle dough.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 6 · Handmade Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Make noodle dough, rest it, roll it thin and cut or tear it into noodles that cook in minutes.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Fresh noodles are easy to make. The dough is just flour and water (sometimes egg), but it is **stiffer than bread dough**, so it needs a good knead and a rest. Handmade noodles are chewy, irregular and delicious, and a great way to use your pasta skills in a new direction.

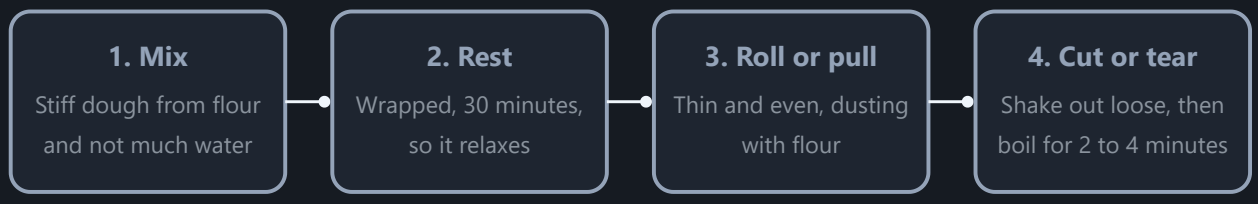


Figure 6. Handmade noodle dough in four steps. The rest is what makes the dough easy to roll.

The dough

- **Low water:** about 45% water to flour (140 ml for 300 g) makes a stiff dough that gives a firm, springy noodle.
- **Flour:** plain flour gives a tender noodle; strong flour gives a chewier, springier one.
- **Salt:** a little, for flavour and strength.
- **Egg (optional):** richer, yellower, firmer noodles.
- **Alkaline salts (optional):** make ramen-style noodles yellow and extra springy.

Kneading and resting

1. The dough is dry at first. Keep kneading for **8 to 10 minutes**: lean your weight into it.
2. Wrap it and **rest for at least 30 minutes**. The gluten relaxes and the dough becomes much easier to roll.
3. If it is too dry and cracks, add water a teaspoon at a time; if it is too sticky, knead in a little flour.

Rolling and cutting

1. Roll as thin as you can, dusting **generously** with flour, so the strips don't stick together.
2. Fold the sheet into a flat roll and cut across with a sharp knife.
3. Shake out the strips and dust with flour. Cook at once or dry briefly on a floured tray.

Cooking

Handmade noodles cook faster than dried ones: usually 2 to 4 minutes in plenty of boiling water. Taste a strand: it should be tender with a slight spring. The thinner you cut them, the faster they cook.

RAW FLOUR, KNIVES AND STORING

Raw flour and raw dough: flour is a raw ingredient and can carry bacteria such as E. coli, which are killed only by cooking. Don't taste raw dough, don't let children eat or play with it, and wash your hands, bowl and surfaces after handling flour and dough.

Cutting dough: use a long, sharp knife or a bench scraper on a stable board, keep your fingertips curled back and cut with a rocking motion. A dull knife drags the dough and slips.

Fresh noodles: cook handmade noodles the same day if you can. Uncooked fresh noodles keep covered in the fridge for about 1 to 2 days, or you can freeze them in loose nests dusted with flour for about a month and cook from frozen. These times are general guidance for fresh pasta-type dough, not an official rule for these noodles. Cooked noodles keep 1 day in the fridge.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Simple flour-and-water noodles

1 hour (20 minutes of work) | 3 portions | making a stiff dough, resting and cutting

Three ingredients and a rolling pin. The dough is stiffer than bread dough. Kneading is hard work at first, but resting makes it easy to roll.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	plain flour, plus extra for dusting
½ tsp	fine salt
140 ml	cool water

1. Mix the flour and salt in a bowl. Add the water gradually, stirring, until the dough clumps together, then knead on a clean surface for **8 to 10 minutes** until smooth. It will be stiff.
2. Wrap in cling film or a damp cloth and rest for **30 minutes**.
3. Roll the dough out as thin as you can (about 2 mm), dusting generously with flour. Fold it over loosely into a flat roll and cut with a sharp knife into strips about 3 to 4 mm wide. Shake the strips out and dust with a little more flour.
4. Cook in plenty of boiling water for **2 to 4 minutes**, until tender with a slight spring. Drain and serve with any sauce from chapter 5.

RAW FLOUR, KNIVES AND STORING

Raw flour and raw dough: flour is a raw ingredient and can carry bacteria such as E. coli, which are killed only by cooking. Don't taste raw dough, don't let children eat or play with it, and wash your hands, bowl and surfaces after handling flour and dough.

Cutting dough: use a long, sharp knife or a bench scraper on a stable board, keep your fingertips curled back and cut with a rocking motion. A dull knife drags the dough and slips.

Fresh noodles: cook handmade noodles the same day if you can. Uncooked fresh noodles keep covered in the fridge for about 1 to 2 days, or you can freeze them in loose nests dusted with flour for about a month and cook from frozen. These times are general guidance for fresh pasta-type dough, not an official rule for these noodles. Cooked noodles keep 1 day in the fridge.

> **Allergens:** most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · STRETCHED

Hand-torn ribbon noodles

1 hour 30 minutes (25 minutes of work) | 3 portions | stretching dough into wide, chewy ribbons

These wide, irregular ribbons are pulled and torn by hand: no cutting skill needed. They are chewy and catch sauce brilliantly. A second rest in oil makes them stretch.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

250 g	plain flour, plus extra for dusting
½ tsp	fine salt
125 ml	cool water
2 tbsp	neutral oil, for brushing

1. Make a stiff dough from the flour, salt and water, knead for 8 minutes and rest, wrapped, for 30 minutes.
2. Divide into 6 pieces. Roll each into a flat oval about 1 cm thick, brush both sides with oil, stack them with oil between, wrap and rest for **30 more minutes**.
3. Take one piece and pull or press it with your fingers and rolling pin into a long thin strip about 4 cm wide and 2 mm thick, then tear it into rough lengths. Dust lightly with flour.
4. Boil in plenty of water for **2 to 3 minutes** until they float and are tender. Drain and serve with the chilli oil or ginger sauce from chapter 5.

RAW FLOUR AND STORING

Raw flour and raw dough: flour is a raw ingredient and can carry bacteria such as E. coli, which are killed only by cooking. Don't taste raw dough, don't let children eat or play with it, and wash your hands, bowl and surfaces after handling flour and dough.

Fresh noodles: cook handmade noodles the same day if you can. Uncooked fresh noodles keep covered in the fridge for about 1 to 2 days, or you can freeze them in loose nests dusted with flour for about a month and cook from frozen. These times are general guidance for fresh pasta-type dough, not an official rule for these noodles. Cooked noodles keep 1 day in the fridge.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label

> them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

LEVEL 2 · EGG

Knife-cut egg noodles

1 hour (25 minutes of work) | 3 portions | cutting even noodles with a knife

An egg gives a firm, golden, springy noodle. Roll thinly, dust well and fold: then cut evenly with a sharp knife. A little practice makes them very neat. Cooking Skills: Pasta 2 covers egg pasta in more depth.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	plain flour, plus extra for dusting
1	Lion-marked egg
½ tsp	fine salt
60 ml	cool water, or a little more as needed

1. Mix the flour and salt. Beat the egg with the water and add to the flour. Mix to a stiff dough and knead for 8 minutes until smooth. Rest, wrapped, for **30 minutes**.
2. Roll out very thin (about 2 mm), dust well with flour, fold into a flat roll about 8 cm wide and cut crosswise into strips about 4 mm wide with a sharp knife.
3. Unroll the strips, shake out, dust with flour and use at once or let dry on a floured tray for 30 minutes.
4. Boil in plenty of water for **2 to 3 minutes** until tender. Drain and serve in soup or with sauce.

RAW EGG, FLOUR AND KNIVES

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Raw flour and raw dough: flour is a raw ingredient and can carry bacteria such as E. coli, which are killed only by cooking. Don't taste raw dough, don't let children eat or play with it, and wash your hands, bowl and surfaces after handling flour and dough.

Cutting dough: use a long, sharp knife or a bench scraper on a stable board, keep your fingertips curled back and cut with a rocking motion. A dull knife drags the dough and slips.

> **Fresh noodles:** cook handmade noodles the same day if you can. Uncooked fresh noodles keep covered in the fridge for about 1 to 2 days, or you can freeze them in loose nests dusted with flour for about a month and cook from frozen. These times are general guidance for fresh pasta-type dough, not an official rule for these noodles. Cooked noodles keep 1 day in the fridge.

LEVEL 3 · OPTIONAL CHALLENGE

Alkaline ramen-style noodles

2 hours (1 hour for the soda to bake, and 1 hour resting) | 3 portions | using alkaline water for a springy, yellow noodle

Ramen noodles are yellow and springy because the dough is made with alkaline water (kansui). This is a home substitute using baked bicarbonate of soda. It is optional: the plain-flour noodles above are a good starting point.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

2 tbsp	bicarbonate of soda (to bake first)
300 g	strong white bread flour, plus extra for dusting
1 tsp	baked bicarbonate of soda (cooled), dissolved in the water
120 ml	warm water
½ tsp	fine salt

1. **Bake the soda:** spread the bicarbonate of soda on a foil-lined tray and bake at 120°C (100°C fan) for **1 hour**. Let it cool completely, wearing gloves, and spoon it into a labelled jar.
2. Stir the 1 tsp of baked soda and the salt into the warm water until dissolved. Mix into the flour to a very stiff dough and knead for 10 minutes. Rest, wrapped, for **1 hour**.
3. Roll as thin as you can (about 2 mm), dusting with flour, fold and cut with a sharp knife into thin strips about 2 mm wide.
4. Boil in plenty of water for **1 to 2 minutes** until springy. Serve at once in the ramen-style bowl from chapter 3 (Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 3).

> **ALKALINE SALTS, RAW FLOUR AND KNIVES**
>
> **Baked bicarbonate of soda:** baking bicarbonate of soda in the oven turns it into sodium carbonate, which is more alkaline and can irritate skin, eyes and the throat. Let it cool completely, handle it with gloves, avoid breathing the dust, label the jar clearly, store it well away from children and food, and use only the small amount in the recipe. This is general guidance: the traditional ingredient (kansui) is sold in some Asian shops and is the safer way to make alkaline noodles. The plain-flour recipes in this chapter don't need it.

> **Raw flour and raw dough:** flour is a raw ingredient and can carry bacteria such as E. coli, which are killed only by cooking. Don't taste raw dough, don't let children eat or play with it, and wash your hands, bowl and surfaces after handling flour and dough.
>
> **Cutting dough:** use a long, sharp knife or a bench scraper on a stable board, keep your fingertips curled back and cut with a rocking motion. A dull knife drags the dough and slips.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Rest time

None, 30 minutes or an hour.

1. Make a batch of dough and divide it into three. Roll one straight away, one after 30 minutes and one after an hour.

Look for: The unrested dough springs back and tears. The rested dough rolls out thin and stays thin. An hour is even easier.

EXPERIMENT

Water amount

Stiff or soft.

1. Make two small doughs from 100 g flour, one with 40 ml water and one with 55 ml. Roll and cut both.

Look for: The stiffer dough makes firm, springy noodles but is harder to knead. The softer dough is easier to work but makes softer, less springy noodles that stick.

EXPERIMENT

Thickness

2 mm or 4 mm.

1. Cut noodles from the same dough rolled to 2 mm and to 4 mm. Boil both for the same time.

Look for: The thin noodles cook fast and are tender; the thick noodles are chewier but can be raw in the middle if not cooked long enough.

EXPERIMENT

Alkaline or plain

The yellow springy effect.

1. Make two small doughs, one with baked bicarbonate of soda in the water and one plain. Cook both.

Look for: The alkaline noodles are yellower, springier and slightly firmer; the plain ones are paler and softer. Taste both. (This is optional: only try it with the safety care in the recipe.)

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Simple flour-and-water noodles				
Hand-torn ribbon noodles				
Knife-cut egg noodles				
Alkaline ramen-style noodles				
Rest time				
Water amount				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Thickness				
Alkaline or plain				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dough crumbly and won't come together	Too little water	Add water a teaspoon at a time; knead longer
Dough springs back when rolled	Not rested	Rest for 30 minutes more
Noodles stick together	Not enough flour	Dust generously; shake out the strips
Noodles fall apart in the water	Too thin or too soft a dough	Use a stiffer dough; cut a little thicker
Noodles chewy and raw inside	Too thick or too short a time	Cut thinner; boil longer and taste
Uneven noodles	Uneven rolling or cutting	Roll evenly; fold neatly; use a ruler for the first few

RAW FLOUR AND EGG, KNIVES AND ALKALINE SALTS

Raw flour and raw dough: flour is a raw ingredient and can carry bacteria such as E. coli, which are killed only by cooking. Don't taste raw dough, don't let children eat or play with it, and wash your hands, bowl and surfaces after handling flour and dough.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook eggs until solid if you are unsure about runny eggs for you or your guests: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Cutting dough: use a long, sharp knife or a bench scraper on a stable board, keep your fingertips curled back and cut with a rocking motion. A dull knife drags the dough and slips.

Baked bicarbonate of soda: baking bicarbonate of soda in the oven turns it into sodium carbonate, which is more alkaline and can irritate skin, eyes and the throat. Let it cool completely, handle it with

gloves, avoid breathing the dust, label the jar clearly, store it well away from children and food, and use only the small amount in the recipe. This is general guidance: the traditional ingredient (kansui) is sold in some Asian shops and is the safer way to make alkaline noodles. The plain-flour recipes in this chapter don't need it.

Allergens: most noodles and soy sauce contain wheat (gluten). Egg noodles contain egg. Check dishes for soy, sesame, peanuts, fish (fish sauce) and shellfish (oyster sauce, prawns), and label them if you share. Soba is often made with some wheat, so it isn't safe for coeliac disease unless the label says gluten-free.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can mix, knead and rest a stiff noodle dough.

☐ I can roll thin, fold and cut with a sharp knife.

☐ I can tear or pull noodles into ribbons.

☐ I cook fresh noodles briefly and taste them.

☐ I store fresh noodles safely and never taste raw dough.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 7 is Upgrading Instant Noodles: making a quick bowl taste like a meal.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 7 · Upgrading Instant Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Turn instant noodles into a proper meal with an egg, vegetables, real flavours and half the salt.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Instant noodles are cheap, fast and a good store-cupboard standby. On their own they are mostly salt and starch, but a few additions turn them into **a real meal in minutes**. This chapter is about making them taste fresh, while keeping the salt in check.

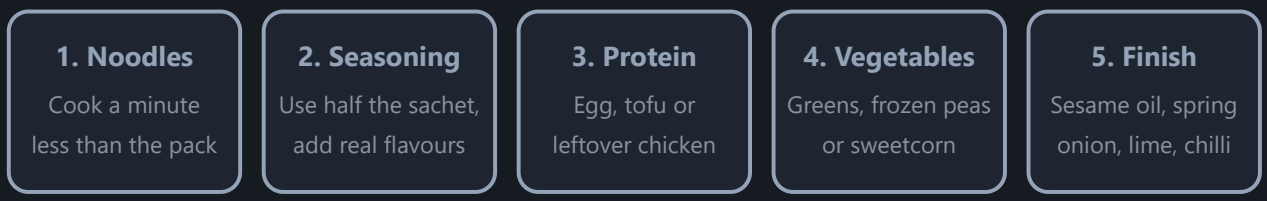


Figure 7. Five upgrades. You don't need all of them: two or three turn a snack into a meal.

Five upgrades

1. **Cook them less:** a minute under the pack time, because they keep softening in the broth.
2. **Use half the seasoning,** and add real flavours (soy, sesame oil, lime, ginger, garlic).
3. **Add a protein:** an egg, tofu, leftover cooked chicken or edamame beans.
4. **Add vegetables:** greens, frozen peas or sweetcorn, or leftover cooked vegetables.
5. **Finish with something fresh:** spring onion, coriander, a squeeze of lime, a drop of sesame oil or chilli.

Soup, sauce or stir-fry

STYLE	HOW	BEST FOR
Soup	Cook in the broth, with egg and greens	A comforting, quick bowl
Saucy (dry)	Drain the noodles, toss with your own sauce	Less salt, more flavour
Fried	Boil briefly, drain, stir-fry with egg and vegetables	Using leftovers; a fast supper
Jar or flask	Layer and add boiling water at lunchtime	A packed hot lunch

SALT AND HOT WATER

Salt: the seasoning sachet in instant noodles is very salty. Using half of it, and adding fresh flavours such as spring onion, lime or sesame oil, cuts the salt without losing taste. Check the label if you are watching your salt intake.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Instant noodles with egg and greens

10 minutes | 1 portion | turning a snack into a meal

The classic upgrade: an egg poached in the broth, a handful of greens, spring onion and a drop of sesame oil. Half the sachet is plenty.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 pack	pack of instant noodles (about 85 g)
½ sachet	of the seasoning sachet
400 ml	water
1	Lion-marked egg
1 handful	spinach or pak choi
1	spring onion, sliced
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil
1 pinch	chilli flakes (optional)

1. Bring the water to the boil in a small pan. Add the noodles and cook for **1 minute less** than the pack says.
2. Stir in half the seasoning. Add the greens and cook for 1 minute.
3. Crack the egg into the simmering broth, cover and cook for **2 to 3 minutes**, until the white is set (leave a little longer for a firm yolk).
4. Tip into a bowl, top with the spring onion, sesame oil and chilli flakes, and eat at once.

> **HOT BROTH, EGG AND SALT**
>
> **Boiling water:** drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.
>
> **Eggs:** use eggs with the British Lion mark and cook them until the white is completely set. If you are unsure about runny yolks for you or your guests, cook the egg until solid: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

> **Salt:** the seasoning sachet in instant noodles is very salty. Using half of it, and adding fresh flavours such as spring onion, lime or sesame oil, cuts the salt without losing taste. Check the label if you are watching your salt intake.

LEVEL 2 · SAUCE

Peanut instant noodles

10 minutes | 1 portion | swapping the sachet for a real sauce

Skip the sachet and stir in a quick peanut sauce (from chapter 5) instead. Hot noodle water thins it to a silky coating.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 pack	pack of instant noodles (about 85 g), seasoning sachet not used
1 tbsp	smooth peanut butter
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	rice vinegar or lime juice
1 tsp	sugar
3 tbsp	hot noodle cooking water
¼	cucumber, cut into matchsticks
1 tbsp	roasted peanuts, crushed

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water for the time on the pack, saving 3 tbsp of the hot water. Drain.
2. In the empty pan or a bowl, whisk the peanut butter, soy sauce, vinegar and sugar with the hot water until smooth.
3. Add the noodles and toss until coated. Top with the cucumber and crushed peanuts.

PEANUT ALLERGY, SALT AND BOILING WATER

Peanuts: peanuts are a common allergen: check labels and label any dish you share.

Salt: the seasoning sachet in instant noodles is very salty. Using half of it, and adding fresh flavours such as spring onion, lime or sesame oil, cuts the salt without losing taste. Check the label if you are watching your salt intake.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven

> gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

LEVEL 2 · FRIED

Stir-fried instant noodles

15 minutes | 2 portions | frying pre-cooked noodles

Instant noodles are good in a stir-fry: they only need a brief boil and cook in minutes in the pan. Drain them well so they fry rather than steam.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2 packs	packs of instant noodles (about 85 g each)
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
2	Lion-marked eggs, beaten
1	carrot, cut into matchsticks
100 g	frozen peas or sweetcorn
2	spring onions, sliced
½ sachet	of one seasoning sachet
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil

1. Boil the noodles for **1 to 2 minutes** until just loose (less than the pack time). Drain, rinse briefly and drain very well.
2. Heat the oil in a large pan over a high heat. Fry the carrot for 2 minutes. Push to the side, add the eggs and scramble until set (about 1 minute).
3. Add the frozen peas or sweetcorn and the noodles and toss for 2 minutes. Add the half sachet of seasoning mixed with the soy sauce and a splash of water, and toss for 1 minute.
4. Add the spring onions and sesame oil and serve at once.

> **HOT PAN, EGGS AND SALT**
>
> **Hot oil:** never leave a pan of hot oil unattended. If oil starts to smoke, take the pan off the heat and let it cool. Never put water on a pan fire: turn off the heat and cover it with a lid or damp cloth, then get out of the room and call 999 if it spreads. Dry vegetables and noodles well, because water on hot oil spits.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and cook them until the white is completely set. If you are unsure about runny yolks for you or your guests, cook the egg until solid: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Salt: the seasoning sachet in instant noodles is very salty. Using half of it, and adding fresh flavours such as spring onion, lime or sesame oil, cuts the salt without losing taste. Check the label if you are watching your salt intake.

LEVEL 3 · TO GO

A noodle jar

10 minutes to pack, 5 minutes to eat | 1 portion | packing a hot lunch that cooks with boiling water

A lunch you assemble in the morning and make by pouring boiling water over it. Use a heatproof jar or flask. Layer the flavourings at the bottom and the noodles on top so the water reaches everything.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 pack	pack of instant noodles (about 85 g)
½ sachet	of the seasoning sachet
1 handful	frozen peas and sweetcorn
1	spring onion, sliced
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil
1 pinch	chilli flakes (optional)
350 ml	boiling water, added at lunchtime

1. In the morning, put the half sachet of seasoning, the sesame oil and chilli flakes in the bottom of a heatproof jar. Add the frozen vegetables and spring onion, then the noodles (broken in half if needed). Close the jar and put it in your bag in an insulated cool bag with an ice pack.
2. At lunchtime, pour boiling water (from a kettle or flask) over the noodles to just cover them, leaving a gap at the top.
3. Cover loosely and leave for **3 to 4 minutes**. Stir well, check the noodles are tender and eat at once.

> **BOILING WATER, JARS AND SALT**
>
> **Noodle jar safety:** use a heatproof jar (toughened glass or a vacuum flask) designed for boiling water, warm it first with hot water so it doesn't crack, never fill it to the brim, keep the lid loose while it stands, and hold it with a cloth because it gets hot. Add the boiling water at the time you eat, and don't leave the prepared jar of noodles warm for hours. Keep any fresh or frozen ingredients cold until then, and don't keep a jar that has had water added.
>
> **Salt:** the seasoning sachet in instant noodles is very salty. Using half of it, and adding fresh

flavours such as spring onion, lime or sesame oil, cuts the salt without losing taste. Check the label if you are watching your salt intake.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Half or full seasoning

How much salt.

1. Make two bowls of instant noodle soup, one with the whole sachet and one with half the sachet plus a squeeze of lime and a drop of sesame oil.

Look for: The whole-sachet bowl is very salty and one-dimensional. The half-sachet bowl with fresh flavours tastes brighter and rounder.

EXPERIMENT

Egg timing

Poached for 2, 3 or 4 minutes.

1. Poach eggs in the broth for 2, 3 and 4 minutes.

Look for: The 2-minute egg has a runny white, the 3-minute egg has a set white with a soft yolk, and the 4-minute egg is firm. Cook solid if you are unsure about runny eggs.

EXPERIMENT

Noodles in the broth or apart

Where to cook them.

1. Cook one portion in the soup pan with the broth and another separately before adding to the broth.

Look for: The noodles cooked in the broth thicken it and turn soft; the separate noodles keep the broth clearer and stay springier.

EXPERIMENT

A fresh topping

With and without.

1. Make two bowls of instant noodles, one plain and one with spring onion, lime and sesame oil.

Look for: The fresh topping lifts the whole bowl: it tastes cleaner and less processed. Small additions make a big difference.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Noodles with egg and greens				
Peanut instant noodles				
Stir-fried instant noodles				
Noodle jar				
Half or full seasoning				
Egg timing				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Noodles in or out of the broth				
A fresh topping				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Too salty	Whole sachet	Use half; add water, lime or sugar; add more fresh ingredients
Mushy noodles	Overcooked	Cook a minute under the pack time
Bland, thin bowl	Not enough additions	Add an egg, greens and a finishing oil
Stir-fry soggy	Noodles wet or pan cool	Drain very well; use a hot pan
Jar noodles hard	Water not hot enough or too little	Use freshly boiled water; cover for the full time
Egg breaks up in the broth	Broth boiling too hard	Lower to a gentle simmer before adding the egg

SALT, EGGS, JARS AND HOT WATER

Salt: the seasoning sachet in instant noodles is very salty. Using half of it, and adding fresh flavours such as spring onion, lime or sesame oil, cuts the salt without losing taste. Check the label if you are watching your salt intake.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and cook them until the white is completely set. If you are unsure about runny yolks for you or your guests, cook the egg until solid: the Food Standards Agency's advice on runny eggs differs for some groups, so check the current guidance at food.gov.uk.

Noodle jar safety: use a heatproof jar (toughened glass or a vacuum flask) designed for boiling water, warm it first with hot water so it doesn't crack, never fill it to the brim, keep the lid loose while it stands, and hold it with a cloth because it gets hot. Add the boiling water at the time you eat, and don't leave the prepared jar of noodles warm for hours. Keep any fresh or frozen ingredients cold until then, and don't keep a jar that has had water added.

Boiling water: drain noodles away from your face because the steam is scalding, use oven gloves for heavy pans, and tip the pan away from you. Don't carry a full pan of boiling water across a room with people or pets in it.

Leftovers: cool noodle dishes quickly (within about 1 hour), keep them covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** (soups with meat or egg: 2 days, with the noodles stored separately), and reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can cook instant noodles a minute under the pack time.

☐ I use half the seasoning and add real flavours.

☐ I can add an egg, vegetables and a fresh finish.

☐ I can fry instant noodles so they stay springy.

☐ I pack a noodle jar safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 8 is A Noodle Night: planning a build-your-own noodle bar.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1

Chapter 8 · A Noodle Night

> **SKILL GOAL**
>
> Plan a build-your-own noodle night, pack a safe cold noodle lunch and design a bowl of your own.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

You now know the noodle families, how to stir-fry, make soup, dress cold noodles, balance sauces, roll noodles by hand and rescue instant noodles. The last chapter is about **putting it together**: planning a noodle night, packing a lunch and writing a bowl of your own.

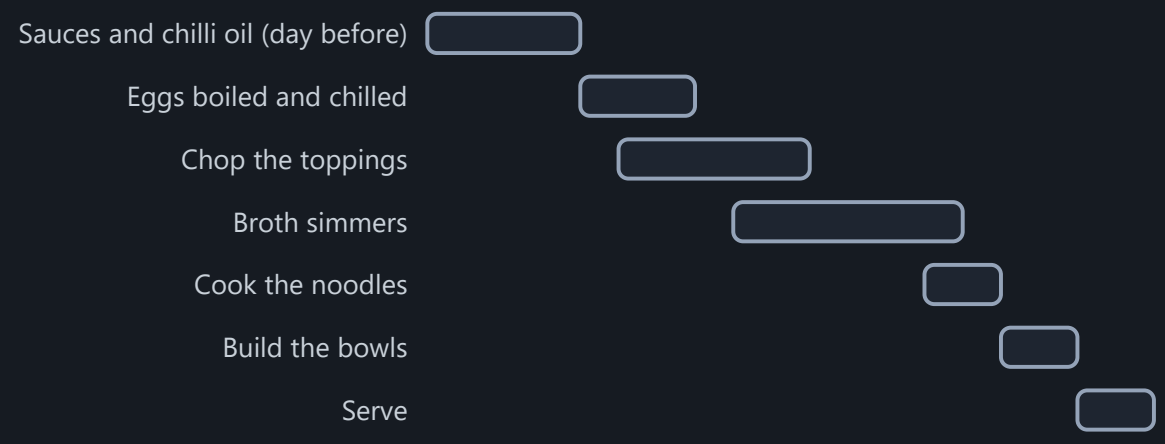


Figure 8. A running order for a noodle night for 4. The sauces and eggs are done early, so the last half hour is only noodles and bowls.

Planning a noodle bar

- **Offer a choice:** hot broth or a cold dressing, so everyone builds their own bowl.
- **Do the slow things early:** sauces, chilli oil, broth and soft-boiled eggs the day before.

- **Cook the noodles last,** in batches, so they are springy.
- **Set out toppings in bowls,** with spoons and labels.
- **Plan the amounts:** about 100 g of dried noodles per person, 300 ml of broth and a few spoonfuls of sauce.

Your skills table

SKILL	CHAPTER	BEST FOR	MY TOP TIP
Cooking noodles	Noodles 1, chapter 1	Every dish	Big pan; taste for doneness; rinse only for cold dishes
Stir-frying	Noodles 1, chapter 2	Fast suppers	Hot pan, small batches, sauce last
Noodle soups	Noodles 1, chapter 3	Comfort food	Broth first; cook noodles apart
Cold noodle salads	Noodles 1, chapter 4	Summer, lunchboxes	Rinse cold; drain; dress late
Sauces	Noodles 1, chapter 5	Everything	Balance salty, sweet, sour, nutty, hot
Handmade noodles	Noodles 1, chapter 6	A weekend project	Rest the dough; roll thin; dust with flour
Instant noodles	Noodles 1, chapter 7	Quick meals	Half the seasoning; add egg and greens

Fill in your own tips below.

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
My favourite noodle dish				
My best sauce				
My best soup				
My best cold noodle dish				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
My best use of instant noodles				
My signature bowl				

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A noodle night for 4

Prepare the day before; 1 hour 30 minutes on the day | 4 portions

building a noodle bar where everyone makes their own bowl

A build-your-own noodle bar: bowls of noodles, a choice of hot broth or a cold dressing, a tray of toppings and a few sauces. It is relaxed for the host, because almost everything is done before the guests sit down.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

400 g	dried egg or wheat noodles (about 100 g per person)
1.2 litres	chicken or vegetable stock, seasoned with soy, garlic and ginger (Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 3)
1 batch	two sauces of your choice from chapter 5 (for example peanut sauce and soy-sesame sauce), made the day before
4	soft-boiled Lion-marked eggs, peeled and halved
200 g	firm tofu, pan-fried until golden
1	cucumber and 2 carrots, cut into matchsticks
1 batch	spring onions, a handful of coriander and 2 limes
1 batch	chilli oil and crushed peanuts, to serve

1. **The day before:** make the sauces and the chilli oil (chapter 5) and the broth. Boil and chill the eggs. Chop the cucumber and carrots and keep them in the fridge.
2. **On the day:** bring the broth to a gentle simmer. Fry the tofu until golden. Put the toppings in small bowls on a tray and label them.
3. Cook the noodles in two batches in plenty of boiling water for 1 minute less than the pack says. Drain and divide between bowls. For a cold bowl, rinse them under cold water and toss with a little oil.
4. Let everyone choose: hot broth poured over, or a sauce tossed through, then their own toppings, chilli oil and lime.

> **FEEDING A CROWD**

Serving a crowd: keep hot broth steaming hot and cold toppings in the fridge until needed. Don't leave cooked noodles, eggs or cold toppings out for more than about 2 hours (a cautious rule of thumb, as in the Cheese course). Clear leftovers into the fridge promptly, keep soup and noodles separate, and eat within a day or two.

Label for guests: put a small card by each sauce and topping saying what it is and whether it contains peanuts, sesame, soy, wheat, egg, fish or shellfish. Mark which are vegetarian. If anyone has a nut allergy, keep the peanut sauce and the peanuts well away and use clean spoons.

LEVEL 2 · PACKED

A cold noodle lunchbox plan

30 minutes the evening before | 2 lunchboxes | packing cold noodles so they stay springy and safe

Cold noodles are the perfect packed lunch if you pack them well. Keep the dressing apart until lunchtime so the noodles don't go soggy.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	dried egg or thin wheat noodles
1 batch	sesame dressing: 2 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tbsp sesame oil, 1 tbsp rice vinegar, 1 tsp sugar (Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 4)
1	carrot and 1/2 cucumber, cut into matchsticks
2	spring onions, sliced
1	small lidded pot for the dressing
1	ice pack and a cool bag

1. Cook, rinse and drain the noodles as in the cold noodle method (Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 4). Toss with a few drops of oil so they don't clump. Chill within an hour.
2. In the morning, pack the noodles in a box, the vegetables on top or in a separate small box, and the dressing in a small lidded pot. Put in a cool bag with an ice pack.
3. At lunchtime, pour on the dressing, toss and eat within 4 hours of packing, keeping the bag out of the sun.

COLD LUNCHBOX

A cold noodle lunchbox: pack the dressed noodles in a sealed box next to an ice pack in a cool bag, keep the sauce and wet toppings separate, and eat within about 2 to 4 hours of packing. Don't keep a lunchbox that has been warm all day. Cold noodles are best eaten within 1 day.

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours.

This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

LEVEL 3 · CREATE

Your signature bowl and skills table

1 hour | 1 to 2 portions | designing a bowl from the skills in this course

Now design a bowl of your own: choose one thing from each column in the table below, write it down, make it, taste it and change one thing. This is your first house noodle recipe.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1	noodle: choose one (egg, rice, soba, handmade or instant)
1	broth or sauce: choose one (a stock, miso, peanut sauce, chilli oil)
1	protein: choose one (egg, tofu, cooked chicken)
2	vegetables: choose two
1	finish: choose one (spring onion, lime, sesame, herbs)
1	notebook and pen

1. **Choose:** a noodle, a broth or sauce, a protein, two vegetables and a finish. Think about contrast: soft and crunchy, rich and fresh.
2. **Plan:** write the order of work, using the diagram in chapter 2 for a stir-fry or the bowl layers in chapter 3 for a soup.
3. **Cook and taste:** taste the sauce or broth before you add the noodles, and adjust the balance (chapter 5).
4. **Write it up:** ingredients by weight, the steps, the times, and what you would change. Make it again with one change.

A HOUSE RECIPE

Write down the first version exactly as you made it, then the changes. After a few tries you will have a recipe that is yours.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed noodle night

Plan it, then run it.

1. Write a plan for a noodle night for 2 or 4 using the running order in this chapter. Note when each part is ready.

Look for: Compare the plan with what happened. The usual mistakes are cooking the noodles too early and leaving the sauces to the last minute. Fix the plan and keep it.

EXPERIMENT

Swap one sauce

One change.

1. Make the same noodle bowl twice, once with the peanut sauce and once with the soy-sesame sauce or ginger sauce.

Look for: A different sauce makes a very different dish from the same noodles and toppings. Write down which you preferred.

EXPERIMENT

Your own signature bowl

Write it, make it, improve it.

1. Make your signature bowl. Change one thing the second time (a different noodle, more acid, a new topping).

Look for: Write down both versions and what changed. This is how recipes grow.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Noodle night				
Lunchbox plan				
Signature bowl				
Timed noodle night				
Swapped sauce				
Second version of my bowl				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Noodles gluey by the time everyone eats	Cooked too early	Cook in batches just before serving; toss with oil
Too many things to do at once	No plan	Write a running order; do the sauces and eggs the day before
Broth cold at the table	Poured too early	Keep it simmering until you serve; warm the bowls
Lunchbox noodles soggy	Dressed too early	Pack the dressing separately
A guest can't eat anything	Didn't ask	Ask beforehand; label sauces; keep a safe, simple option
Leftovers unsafe	Left out too long	Clear into the fridge after about 2 hours; throw away what sat out all evening

PARTY AND LUNCHBOX SAFETY

Serving a crowd: keep hot broth steaming hot and cold toppings in the fridge until needed. Don't leave cooked noodles, eggs or cold toppings out for more than about 2 hours (a cautious rule of thumb, as in the Cheese course). Clear leftovers into the fridge promptly, keep soup and noodles separate, and eat within a day or two.

Label for guests: put a small card by each sauce and topping saying what it is and whether it contains peanuts, sesame, soy, wheat, egg, fish or shellfish. Mark which are vegetarian. If anyone has a nut allergy, keep the peanut sauce and the peanuts well away and use clean spoons.

A cold noodle lunchbox: pack the dressed noodles in a sealed box next to an ice pack in a cool bag, keep the sauce and wet toppings separate, and eat within about 2 to 4 hours of packing. Don't keep a lunchbox that has been warm all day. Cold noodles are best eaten within 1 day.

Cooked noodles and cold dishes: cooked starchy foods left at room temperature can grow bacteria (rice is the best-known case, and cooked noodles are treated the same way). Cool noodles quickly under cold water, put them in the fridge within about **1 hour**, keep them covered, eat within **1 day**, and don't leave a cold noodle dish out for more than about 2 hours. This is general food-safety guidance in line with the Rice courses; I haven't found a rule written specially for noodles.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can plan a build-your-own noodle night.

☐ I do the sauces and eggs ahead and cook the noodles last.

☐ I can pack a cold noodle lunch that is safe and springy.

☐ I label dishes for allergies.

☐ I can design and write down my own bowl.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 1 is complete. Cooking Skills: Rice 2 and Cooking Skills: Pasta 2 are good companions.