

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Noodles around the world: ramen, pho, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and South-East Asian dishes, plus the toppings that finish a bowl.

8 Chapters | Philip Osztromok | Generated with Claude

COOKING SKILLS: NOODLES 2

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Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 1 · Ramen Broths and Tare

SKILL GOAL

Build a ramen bowl from tare, broth, aroma oil, noodles and toppings, and season it exactly.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A ramen shop doesn't simply season a pot of broth. It puts a concentrated seasoning called **tare** in the bowl, ladles hot broth over it, and finishes with an aroma oil. This makes the broth simple, the seasoning exact, and each bowl different. You can do the same at home.

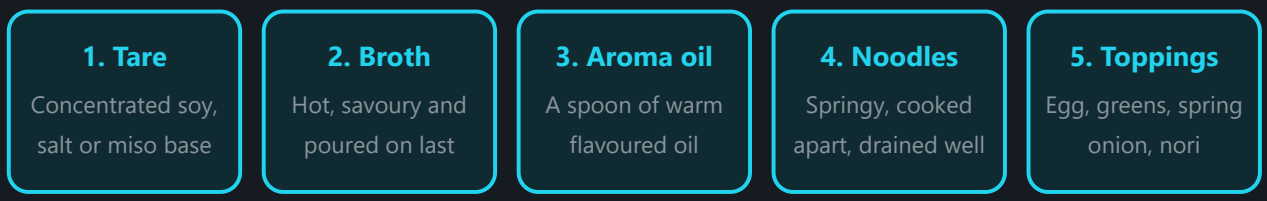


Figure 1. A ramen bowl has five parts. The tare in the bottom of the bowl does the seasoning, which is why the broth can be mild.

The three tares

STYLE	TARE BASED ON	BROTH	CHARACTER
Shoyu	Soy sauce, sugar, aromatics	Chicken (or chicken and pork)	Savoury, dark-gold and balanced
Shio	Salt, a little sugar and acid	Light chicken broth	Clean, delicate, golden-clear
Miso	Miso paste, soy, a little sesame	Chicken or vegetable	Rich, nutty and a little sweet

The broth

- **Start with good stock.** A homemade chicken stock is best, but a good stock cube or liquid stock works if you simmer it with ginger, garlic and spring onion tops.
- **Poaching chicken in the broth** gives both topping and flavour.
- **Simmer, never boil hard,** to keep the broth clear. Skim any scum from the top.
- **Serve it boiling-hot:** ramen cools quickly. Warm the bowls.

The aroma oil

A spoonful of oil, warmed with spring onion, garlic or ginger and floated on top, gives the first scent as the bowl arrives. Warm it gently: it should sizzle softly, not fry or brown.

Building the bowl

1. Warm the bowls.
2. Put the **tare** in the bottom of each bowl.
3. Ladle on the **boiling-hot broth** and stir.
4. Add the **noodles** (cooked apart and well drained), then the toppings.
5. Finish with the **aroma oil** and fresh toppings, and eat at once.

> **RAW MEAT, HOT BROTH AND LEFTOVERS**
>
> **Raw chicken and pork:** wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw chicken or pork, and keep it away from cooked food and toppings. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot all the way through, with no pink meat and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Don't wash raw chicken: splashes spread bacteria.
>
> **Broth and leftovers:** cool broth quickly (pour it into shallow containers and chill within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge and use within **2 days**, or freeze it. Reheat until it is boiling or steaming hot all the way through, and only once. Keep noodles apart: they go swollen and soft in broth.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Shoyu chicken ramen with home-made tare

1 hour | 2 portions | building a bowl from tare, broth, aroma oil, noodles and toppings

Shoyu means soy sauce. The tare is a small pan of soy sauce, sugar and aromatics simmered together. A spoonful in the bottom of each bowl seasons the whole dish. No mirin or sake: vinegar and sugar do the job.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

3 tbsp	soy sauce (for the tare)
1 tbsp	sugar (for the tare)
1 tsp	rice vinegar (for the tare)
1	garlic clove and 1 slice of ginger (for the tare)
3 tbsp	water (for the tare)
1 litre	chicken stock
2	bone-in, skinless chicken thighs
200 g	ramen or thin egg noodles
2	Lion-marked eggs
2 handfuls	spinach
2	spring onions, finely sliced (white and green parts separated)
1 tbsp	vegetable oil, for the aroma oil
1	nori sheet, torn (optional)

1. **Tare:** simmer the soy sauce, sugar, vinegar, garlic, ginger and water in a small pan for 5 minutes. Strain. It keeps in the fridge for about a week in a clean jar.
2. **Broth and chicken:** bring the stock to a simmer, add the chicken thighs and simmer gently for **20 to 25 minutes**, until cooked through with no pink and clear juices. Lift out, rest for 5 minutes and slice, discarding the bones.
3. **Eggs:** boil for 6 and a half minutes (jammy) or 10 minutes (solid), cool in cold water, peel and halve.

4. **Aroma oil:** warm the oil in a small pan with the white parts of the spring onion for 1 to 2 minutes until fragrant. Don't let them brown.
5. **Noodles:** cook in a separate pan for the time on the pack (adding the spinach for the last 30 seconds). Drain well.
6. **Build the bowl:** put 2 tbsp of tare in the bottom of each bowl, ladle in about 400 ml of boiling-hot broth, stir, add the noodles, spinach, sliced chicken and egg, drizzle with aroma oil and top with the green spring onion and nori.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT BROTH, EGGS, SALT AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken and pork: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw chicken or pork, and keep it away from cooked food and toppings. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot all the way through, with no pink meat and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Don't wash raw chicken: splashes spread bacteria.

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.

Salt: the tare is very salty, so measure it and taste before adding more. You can always add more tare, but you can't take it out.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (pour it into shallow containers and chill within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge and use within **2 days**, or freeze it. Reheat until it is boiling or steaming hot all the way through, and only once. Keep noodles apart: they go swollen and soft in broth.

Allergens: soy sauce and miso contain soy and (usually) wheat. Ramen noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Sesame, tahini and some miso, dashi and Worcestershire sauce contain sesame, fish or barley. Check labels and tell guests.

LEVEL 2 · MISO

Miso ramen

35 minutes | 2 portions | making a miso tare and keeping it off the boil

Miso ramen has a richer, nuttier flavour. The miso goes in the tare, not the pot, so you don't boil it away: stir it into hot broth in the bowl.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

3 tbsp	white or red miso paste (for the tare)
1 tbsp	soy sauce (for the tare)
1 tsp	sugar (for the tare)
1 tsp	tahini or sesame paste (for the tare)
1 tbsp	water (for the tare)
1 litre	chicken or vegetable stock
200 g	ramen or thin egg noodles
100 g	mushrooms, sliced
100 g	sweetcorn
2 handfuls	spinach
2 tsp	butter (optional, for the Hokkaido style)
2	spring onions, sliced

1. **Tare:** mix the miso, soy sauce, sugar, tahini and water in a small bowl to a smooth paste.
2. Simmer the stock with the mushrooms for 5 minutes. Cook the noodles in a separate pan, adding the spinach for the last 30 seconds. Drain.
3. Put half the tare in each bowl and ladle in hot broth, stirring until it dissolves. Don't boil the broth after the miso is in.
4. Add the noodles, mushrooms, spinach and sweetcorn. Top with butter, if using, and the spring onions.

> **HOT BROTH, SALT AND ALLERGENS**

Miso: stir miso in off the boil, because boiling spoils the flavour, and taste before adding more salt. Some miso contains barley (gluten) or fish stock.

Salt: the tare is very salty, so measure it and taste before adding more. You can always add more tare, but you can't take it out.

Allergens: soy sauce and miso contain soy and (usually) wheat. Ramen noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Sesame, tahini and some miso, dashi and Worcestershire sauce contain sesame, fish or barley. Check labels and tell guests.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (pour it into shallow containers and chill within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge and use within **2 days**, or freeze it. Reheat until it is boiling or steaming hot all the way through, and only once. Keep noodles apart: they go swollen and soft in broth.

LEVEL 2 · SALT

Shio (salt) ramen

40 minutes | 2 portions | seasoning a clear, delicate broth with a salt tare

Shio ramen has the lightest, cleanest broth: salt, a little sugar and acid, with the chicken flavour doing the talking. A good test of how well you can season.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1½ tsp	fine salt (for the tare)
1 tsp	sugar (for the tare)
1 tsp	rice vinegar or lemon juice (for the tare)
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger (for the tare)
3 tbsp	hot chicken stock (for the tare)
1 litre	chicken stock
1	chicken breast
200 g	thin ramen or wheat noodles
1	carrot, peeled into ribbons
100 g	pak choi, quartered
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil
1 pinch	white pepper and lemon zest

1. **Tare:** stir the salt, sugar, vinegar, ginger and hot stock together until the salt dissolves.
2. Simmer the stock gently and add the chicken breast. Cook for **15 to 20 minutes**, until cooked through with no pink. Lift out, rest and slice thinly.
3. Cook the noodles in a separate pan, adding the carrot and pak choi for the last minute. Drain.
4. Put half the tare in each bowl and ladle in the boiling-hot broth. Taste: add a pinch more salt if it is flat. Add the noodles, vegetables and chicken, then the sesame oil, pepper and lemon zest.

> **RAW CHICKEN, HOT BROTH AND SALT**

Raw chicken and pork: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw chicken or pork, and keep it away from cooked food and toppings. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot all the way through, with no pink meat and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Don't wash raw chicken: splashes spread bacteria.

Salt: the tare is very salty, so measure it and taste before adding more. You can always add more tare, but you can't take it out.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (pour it into shallow containers and chill within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge and use within **2 days**, or freeze it. Reheat until it is boiling or steaming hot all the way through, and only once. Keep noodles apart: they go swollen and soft in broth.

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 · RICH

Sesame and pork tantanmen-style ramen

40 minutes | 2 portions | frying a topping and making a creamy sesame broth

A rich, nutty, spicy bowl: sesame broth topped with spicy pork mince. It is a tantanmen-style ramen, a Japanese version of Sichuan dan dan noodles. The pork must be cooked right through.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

150 g	pork mince
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
2	garlic cloves, grated
1 tsp	grated fresh ginger
1 tbsp	soy sauce, divided
1 tsp	sugar
1 tsp	chilli bean paste or chilli sauce
2 tbsp	tahini or sesame paste (for the broth)
600 ml	chicken stock
1 tsp	chilli oil (optional)
200 g	ramen noodles
100 g	pak choi
2	spring onions, sliced

1. Heat the oil in a pan over a medium-high heat. Fry the pork mince, breaking it up, for **5 to 6 minutes**, until browned and cooked through with no pink. Add the garlic, ginger, half the soy sauce, the sugar and the chilli paste and fry for 2 minutes.
2. In a pan, whisk the tahini into the stock and the remaining soy sauce. Heat gently until steaming hot (don't boil).
3. Cook the noodles with the pak choi for the last minute and drain.

4. Divide the noodles between bowls, pour over the creamy broth and top with the pork, spring onions and chilli oil.

> **PORK MINCE, HOT BROTH, SESAME AND ALLERGENS**
>
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> **Allergens:** soy sauce and miso contain soy and (usually) wheat. Ramen noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Sesame, tahini and some miso, dashi and Worcestershire sauce contain sesame, fish or barley. Check labels and tell guests.
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> **Salt:** the tare is very salty, so measure it and taste before adding more. You can always add more tare, but you can't take it out.
>
> **Broth and leftovers:** cool broth quickly (pour it into shallow containers and chill within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge and use within **2 days**, or freeze it. Reheat until it is boiling or steaming hot all the way through, and only once. Keep noodles apart: they go swollen and soft in broth.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Tare amount

1, 2 and 3 spoons.

1. Make three bowls of broth with 1, 2 and 3 tbsp of the shoyu tare in 400 ml of hot broth. Taste each.

Look for: One spoon tastes thin and the three-spoon bowl is very salty. The middle is balanced. This shows how the tare, not the broth, sets the seasoning.

EXPERIMENT

Simmer time

Quick or long.

1. Simmer two small pots of stock with chicken wings, ginger and garlic, one for 20 minutes and one for 90 minutes. Taste both plain.

Look for: The longer broth is richer and a little more gelatinous with deeper chicken flavour. The shorter one is lighter. Decide how much time the dish is worth.

EXPERIMENT

Aroma oil

With and without.

1. Make two identical bowls, one with a spoon of aroma oil on top and one without.

Look for: The oil adds scent as you lift the bowl and a silky richness. The bowl without tastes flatter and thinner.

EXPERIMENT

Tare in the pot or the bowl

Where to season.

1. Season one small pot of broth with the tare and keep it warm for 30 minutes. Season a second bowl just before serving.

Look for: The pot seasoned early tastes slightly duller and saltier; the tare in the bowl keeps a fresh, precise flavour. This is why ramen shops season each bowl.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Shoyu chicken ramen				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Miso ramen				
Shio ramen				
Tantanmen-style ramen				
Tare amount				
Simmer time				
Aroma oil				
Tare in pot or bowl				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Bland broth	Not enough tare or weak stock	Add tare a spoonful at a time; simmer the stock with aromatics
Too salty	Too much tare	Dilute with hot water or stock; use less next time
Cloudy broth	Boiled hard	Simmer gently; skim
Greasy broth	Fat not skimmed	Chill and lift the fat, or skim with a spoon
Miso tastes dull or bitter	Boiled	Stir in off the boil
Chicken dry	Boiled too hard or too long	Poach gently; check at 15 minutes

MEAT, BROTH, SALT AND ALLERGENS

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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.

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CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can make a shoyu tare and use it to season a bowl.
- ☐ I can poach chicken in broth and slice it.
- ☐ I can keep miso off the boil.
- ☐ I can build a ramen bowl in the right order.
- ☐ I cool and store broth safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 2 is Vietnamese Noodle Soups: charred aromatics, spices and a clear broth.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 2 · Vietnamese Noodle Soups

SKILL GOAL

Make a clear, fragrant pho broth from charred aromatics and toasted spices, and finish the bowl with fresh herbs.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Pho (pronounced "fuh") is a Vietnamese noodle soup with a **clear, fragrant broth** and a plate of fresh herbs. Its flavour comes from three things: onion and ginger charred until smoky, whole spices toasted until fragrant, and a gentle, long simmer.

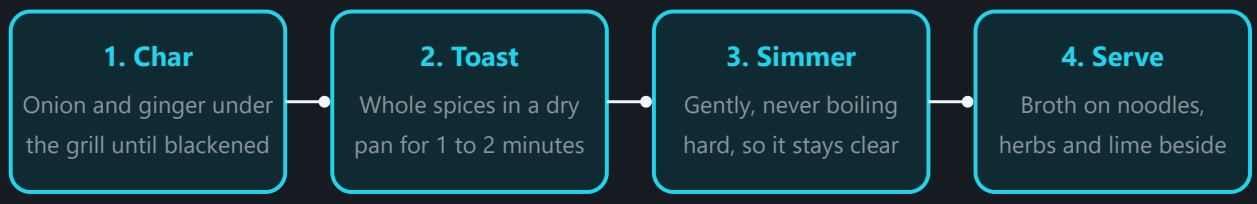


Figure 2. The pho method. Charring and toasting build the flavour; a gentle simmer keeps the broth clear.

The broth

- **Char the onion and ginger** under the grill or over a flame. It turns the sharp raw flavour sweet and smoky.
- **Toast the spices:** star anise, cinnamon, cloves and coriander seeds give pho its perfume. Use whole spices, not ground.
- **Simmer gently:** a rolling boil clouds the broth with fat and scum. Skim as it simmers.
- **Season at the end:** with fish sauce (salt and savour) and a little sugar, to balance. Taste and adjust.

The noodles and toppings

- **Flat rice noodles** (about 3 mm wide): soak or cook as the pack says, drain well and put in the bowl before the broth.
- **The broth must be boiling-hot** when it goes in the bowl.
- **Serve the herbs on the side** (Thai basil, coriander, mint), with lime, sliced chilli and hoisin and chilli sauces, so everyone finishes their own bowl.

PHO	MEAT	BROTH TIME	FLAVOUR
Quick chicken	Cooked chicken	30 minutes	Light and fragrant
Beef	Simmered brisket	3 hours	Deep and rich
Vegetable	Tofu and mushrooms	30 minutes	Earthy and spiced

GRILL, SPICES, RAW MEAT AND HERBS

Charring under the grill: grill the onion and ginger on a tray with the door or grill pan 10 cm from the heat, turn them with tongs and watch them, because charred vegetables can flare. Open a window or use the extractor fan, and never leave the grill unattended. Let them cool before handling. If anything catches fire, turn off the heat and keep the door shut: don't use water.

Toasting spices: whole spices burn in seconds. Toast them in a dry pan over a medium heat, shaking the pan, for 1 to 2 minutes, until fragrant, then tip them out at once. Keep your face back, because the fumes can make you cough.

Raw pork, chicken and beef: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and keep it away from cooked food and herbs. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). The beef here is simmered until tender, not served raw: don't pour hot broth over raw beef slices and call it cooked.

Bean sprouts and raw herbs: wash herbs well. Raw bean sprouts can carry bacteria, and the NHS advises pregnant women and other vulnerable people to cook them thoroughly: I have left them out of the herb plate. Use extra herbs, lettuce or blanched sprouts instead.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Quick chicken pho

45 minutes | 2 big portions | charring aromatics and toasting spices

A shortcut pho: charred onion and ginger and toasted spices make a bought stock taste fragrant and clean. The result is far better than the sum of its parts.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1	onion, halved
7 cm	fresh ginger, halved lengthways
2	star anise
1	cinnamon stick
3	cloves
1.2 litres	good chicken stock
1 tbsp	fish sauce (or soy sauce)
1 tsp	sugar
200 g	flat rice noodles (about 3 mm wide)
150 g	cooked chicken, shredded
1 handful	Thai basil, coriander and mint leaves
1	lime, in wedges
1	red chilli, sliced (optional)
2	spring onions, sliced

1. **Char:** put the onion halves (cut side up) and ginger on a tray under a hot grill for 8 to 10 minutes, turning once, until blackened in spots. Cool and rinse off the worst of the char.
2. **Toast:** dry-fry the star anise, cinnamon and cloves in a pan for 1 to 2 minutes until fragrant.
3. **Simmer:** put the stock, onion, ginger and spices in a pan. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for **25 to 30 minutes**. Strain, season with the fish sauce and sugar and taste.

4. Soak or cook the rice noodles as the pack says and drain. Warm the chicken in some of the broth until steaming hot.
5. Divide the noodles and chicken between bowls and ladle over the boiling-hot broth. Serve with the herbs, lime, chilli and spring onions on the side so each person adds their own.

GRILL, SPICES, HOT BROTH AND ALLERGENS

Charring under the grill: grill the onion and ginger on a tray with the door or grill pan 10 cm from the heat, turn them with tongs and watch them, because charred vegetables can flare. Open a window or use the extractor fan, and never leave the grill unattended. Let them cool before handling. If anything catches fire, turn off the heat and keep the door shut: don't use water.

Toasting spices: whole spices burn in seconds. Toast them in a dry pan over a medium heat, shaking the pan, for 1 to 2 minutes, until fragrant, then tip them out at once. Keep your face back, because the fumes can make you cough.

Allergens: fish sauce contains fish, hoisin sauce contains soy (and sometimes wheat and sesame) and rice noodles are usually gluten-free but check the label. Use soy sauce instead of fish sauce for a vegetarian or fish-free bowl.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (shallow containers, chilled within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze it, and reheat until boiling or steaming hot, once only. Keep noodles and herbs apart from the broth.

LEVEL 2 · LONG SIMMER

Beef pho with simmered brisket

3 hours 30 minutes (30 minutes of work) | 3 portions | making a clear beef broth and tender meat

Classic beef pho takes time. The brisket simmers for hours until tender and gives the broth body. The meat is cooked fully in the broth, and sliced afterwards: no raw beef.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

400 g	beef brisket or shin, in one piece
1.5 litres	water or beef stock
1	onion, halved
7 cm	fresh ginger, halved
2	star anise
1	cinnamon stick
1 tsp	coriander seeds
3	cloves
2 tbsp	fish sauce
1 tbsp	sugar
200 g	flat rice noodles
1 handful	Thai basil, coriander and mint
1	lime, in wedges
2	spring onions, sliced

1. Char the onion and ginger under the grill and toast the spices in a dry pan, as for the quick pho.
2. Put the beef in a large pan, cover with water, bring to the boil for 5 minutes and drain, rinsing off the scum. Return to a clean pan with the 1.5 litres of water or stock, the onion, ginger and spices.
3. Bring to a bare simmer and cook with the lid ajar for **2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours**, skimming off any scum, until the beef is very tender. Add the fish sauce and sugar for

the last 15 minutes.

4. Lift out the beef, rest for 10 minutes and slice thinly against the grain. Strain the broth and taste: adjust with fish sauce and sugar.
5. Soak or cook the noodles and divide between bowls. Add the sliced beef, ladle over boiling-hot broth and serve with herbs, lime and spring onions.

GRILL, SPICES, RAW BEEF AND HOT BROTH

Charring under the grill: grill the onion and ginger on a tray with the door or grill pan 10 cm from the heat, turn them with tongs and watch them, because charred vegetables can flare. Open a window or use the extractor fan, and never leave the grill unattended. Let them cool before handling. If anything catches fire, turn off the heat and keep the door shut: don't use water.

Toasting spices: whole spices burn in seconds. Toast them in a dry pan over a medium heat, shaking the pan, for 1 to 2 minutes, until fragrant, then tip them out at once. Keep your face back, because the fumes can make you cough.

Raw pork, chicken and beef: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and keep it away from cooked food and herbs. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). The beef here is simmered until tender, not served raw: don't pour hot broth over raw beef slices and call it cooked.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (shallow containers, chilled within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze it, and reheat until boiling or steaming hot, once only. Keep noodles and herbs apart from the broth.

Allergens: fish sauce contains fish, hoisin sauce contains soy (and sometimes wheat and sesame) and rice noodles are usually gluten-free but check the label. Use soy sauce instead of fish sauce for a vegetarian or fish-free bowl.

LEVEL 2 · VEGETARIAN

Vegetable pho

50 minutes | 2 portions | building depth without meat or fish sauce

Dried shiitake mushrooms and charred aromatics give a vegetable broth real depth. Soy sauce stands in for fish sauce.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1	onion, halved
7 cm	fresh ginger, halved
4	dried shiitake mushrooms
2	star anise
1	cinnamon stick
3	cloves
1.2 litres	vegetable stock
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
200 g	flat rice noodles
200 g	firm tofu, cubed and pan-fried
1	carrot, peeled into ribbons
1 handful	herbs, lime and spring onions to serve

1. Char the onion and ginger and toast the spices as for the quick pho. Soak the shiitake in 200 ml of boiling water for 20 minutes, then slice (keep the soaking water).
2. Simmer the stock with the onion, ginger, spices, shiitake and their soaking water (leave the grit at the bottom of the bowl) for **25 to 30 minutes**. Strain and season with soy sauce and sugar.
3. Cook the noodles. Pan-fry the tofu in a little oil until golden. Add the carrot ribbons to the broth for the last minute.

4. Divide the noodles between bowls, add the tofu and ladle over the hot broth. Serve with herbs, lime and spring onions.

GRILL, SPICES, HOT BROTH AND ALLERGENS

Charring under the grill: grill the onion and ginger on a tray with the door or grill pan 10 cm from the heat, turn them with tongs and watch them, because charred vegetables can flare. Open a window or use the extractor fan, and never leave the grill unattended. Let them cool before handling. If anything catches fire, turn off the heat and keep the door shut: don't use water.

Toasting spices: whole spices burn in seconds. Toast them in a dry pan over a medium heat, shaking the pan, for 1 to 2 minutes, until fragrant, then tip them out at once. Keep your face back, because the fumes can make you cough.

Allergens: soy sauce and tofu contain soy; soy sauce usually contains wheat.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (shallow containers, chilled within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze it, and reheat until boiling or steaming hot, once only. Keep noodles and herbs apart from the broth.

LEVEL 3 · GRILLED

Grilled pork and vermicelli bowl (bun cha-style)

50 minutes | 3 portions | grilling patties and balancing a dipping sauce

Little grilled pork patties with a sweet-sour-salty dipping sauce, cold noodles, lettuce and plenty of herbs. Mix the sauce first and taste it: it should be bright.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	pork mince
1	shallot or small onion, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp	fish sauce (or soy sauce)
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tsp	black pepper
150 g	rice vermicelli
1	round lettuce, leaves separated
½	cucumber, in matchsticks
1 handful	mint, coriander and Thai basil
3 tbsp	lime juice, for the dipping sauce
2 tbsp	fish sauce, for the dipping sauce
2 tbsp	sugar, for the dipping sauce
4 tbsp	water, for the dipping sauce
1	carrot, in matchsticks, quick-pickled in 2 tbsp rice vinegar and 1 tsp sugar for 30 minutes

1. Mix the pork, shallot, garlic, fish sauce, sugar and pepper and shape into 12 small, flat patties. Chill for 15 minutes.
2. Make the dipping sauce: stir the lime juice, fish sauce, sugar and water together until the sugar dissolves. Add a little crushed garlic and chilli if you like.
3. Soak the vermicelli as the pack says, rinse under cold water and drain well.

4. Grill or pan-fry the patties for **4 to 5 minutes a side**, until browned and cooked through with no pink and clear juices. Cut one open to check.
5. Serve the patties warm with the noodles, lettuce, cucumber, herbs and pickled carrot. Put the dipping sauce in small bowls and dip or pour it over.

> **RAW PORK, GRILLING AND RAW VEGETABLES**
>
> **Raw pork, chicken and beef:** wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and keep it away from cooked food and herbs. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). The beef here is simmered until tender, not served raw: don't pour hot broth over raw beef slices and call it cooked.
>
> **Bean sprouts and raw herbs:** wash herbs well. Raw bean sprouts can carry bacteria, and the NHS advises pregnant women and other vulnerable people to cook them thoroughly: I have left them out of the herb plate. Use extra herbs, lettuce or blanched sprouts instead.
>
> **Allergens:** fish sauce contains fish, hoisin sauce contains soy (and sometimes wheat and sesame) and rice noodles are usually gluten-free but check the label. Use soy sauce instead of fish sauce for a vegetarian or fish-free bowl.
>
> **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.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Charred or raw

Aromatics.

1. Simmer two small pots of stock for 20 minutes, one with charred onion and ginger and one with raw. Taste both.

Look for: The charred pot tastes sweeter, rounder and smokier. The raw one tastes sharp and flat.

EXPERIMENT

Simmer time

20 minutes or 1 hour.

1. Simmer two pots of spiced stock, one for 20 minutes and one for an hour. Taste.

Look for: The longer broth has deeper spice and aroma; the shorter is cleaner and lighter. Watch it doesn't boil dry: add a little water.

EXPERIMENT

Toasted or untoasted spices

A dry pan.

1. Make two small pots of stock with the same spices, one toasted and one untoasted.

Look for: The toasted spices smell richer and warmer and the broth has more depth. The untoasted ones taste thin and a little raw.

EXPERIMENT

Herbs on the side or in the bowl

When to add them.

1. Put herbs in one bowl before the broth and leave them on the side for another.

Look for: The herbs in the bowl wilt and turn dark and soft; the ones on the side stay green, fresh and fragrant. That is why they come on a plate.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Quick chicken pho				
Beef pho				
Vegetable pho				
Grilled pork bowl				
Charred or raw				
Simmer time				
Toasted spices				
Herbs on the side				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Cloudy broth	Boiled hard, or scum not skimmed	Simmer gently; skim; strain through a fine sieve
Bitter broth	Burnt spices or charred too far	Toast gently; char until blackened in spots only
Bland broth	Not enough spice or seasoning	Add a little more fish sauce, sugar or spice; simmer longer
Mushy noodles	Left in the hot broth	Add noodles to the bowl just before the broth
Tough brisket	Not simmered long enough	Keep simmering gently until it is tender
Greasy broth	Fat not skimmed	Chill and lift the fat; or skim with a spoon

GRILL, SPICES, RAW MEAT, HOT BROTH AND ALLERGENS

Charring under the grill: grill the onion and ginger on a tray with the door or grill pan 10 cm from the heat, turn them with tongs and watch them, because charred vegetables can flare. Open a window or use the extractor fan, and never leave the grill unattended. Let them cool before handling. If

anything catches fire, turn off the heat and keep the door shut: don't use water.

Toasting spices: whole spices burn in seconds. Toast them in a dry pan over a medium heat, shaking the pan, for 1 to 2 minutes, until fragrant, then tip them out at once. Keep your face back, because the fumes can make you cough.

Raw pork, chicken and beef: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and keep it away from cooked food and herbs. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). The beef here is simmered until tender, not served raw: don't pour hot broth over raw beef slices and call it cooked.

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: fish sauce contains fish, hoisin sauce contains soy (and sometimes wheat and sesame) and rice noodles are usually gluten-free but check the label. Use soy sauce instead of fish sauce for a vegetarian or fish-free bowl.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly (shallow containers, chilled within about 1 to 2 hours), keep it covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze it, and reheat until boiling or steaming hot, once only. Keep noodles and herbs apart from the broth.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can char aromatics and toast spices safely.
- ☐ I can simmer a clear, fragrant broth.
- ☐ I can cook brisket until tender and slice it.
- ☐ I can serve pho with a plate of herbs.
- ☐ I cool and store broth safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 3 is Japanese Noodle Dishes: udon, yakisoba and cold ramen.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 3 · Japanese Noodle Dishes

SKILL GOAL

Cook udon, yakisoba and cold ramen, matching the noodle to the dish and seasoning the broth or sauce carefully.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Japanese noodle dishes match the noodle to the dish: **thin and springy ramen for rich broth, medium yakisoba for the wok and thick, soft udon for a mild, clear broth**. This chapter is about making each of them well, with the broth and the sauce as the star.



Ramen, about 2 mm
thin and springy, in hot broth

Yakisoba, about 3 mm
stir-fried, holds the sauce

Udon, 5 to 8 mm
thick and soft, in mild broth

Figure 3. The noodle matches the dish: thin and springy for rich broth, medium for stir-fries and thick and soft for mild broth.

The noodles

NOODLE	WHAT IT IS	BEST FOR
Udon	Thick, soft, chewy wheat noodles (fresh, frozen or dried)	Mild broths, curry udon, stir-fried udon
Ramen	Thin, springy wheat noodles, often with alkaline salt	Rich broths and cold ramen salad
Yakisoba	Medium wheat noodles, usually sold fresh in packs	Stir-fries with a sweet-sour sauce

NOODLE	WHAT IT IS	BEST FOR
Soba	Buckwheat noodles	Cold with a dipping sauce (Noodles 1, chapter 4)

The broth

- **Dashi** is the base of Japanese cooking: a light, savoury stock from kombu seaweed and bonito (fish) flakes. Instant dashi granules are quick; kombu alone makes a vegetarian version.
- **Season with soy sauce and a little sugar,** and a splash of rice vinegar where mirin would go.
- **Serve piping hot,** with the noodles cooked in a separate pan.

Fresh, frozen or dried udon

- **Frozen udon** is soft and bouncy, ready in 1 to 3 minutes: the best everyday choice.
- **Vacuum-packed udon** only needs to be loosened in hot water.
- **Dried udon** keeps for months and takes 8 to 12 minutes. A little firmer.

DASHI, HOT BROTH AND ALLERGENS

Dashi: instant dashi granules and bonito flakes contain fish. For a vegetarian or fish-free broth, soak a 10 cm piece of kombu (dried seaweed) in 600 ml of cold water for 30 minutes, then heat it gently and remove it just before it boils (a rolling boil makes it bitter and slimy).

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: Worcestershire sauce contains anchovy (fish) and often barley malt vinegar (gluten); Japanese curry roux usually contains wheat and sometimes milk; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; udon and ramen contain wheat; mayonnaise contains egg. Check labels, and use soy sauce or a vegetarian roux for a fish-free or vegetarian dish.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Kake udon

20 minutes | 2 portions | making a clear Japanese broth and cooking udon

Kake udon is the plainest udon: thick noodles in a gentle, savoury broth, with spring onion. It is all about the broth, so taste it carefully.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

600 ml	dashi (made with kombu, or instant dashi granules)
3 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tsp	rice vinegar (in place of mirin)
2	portions of udon (fresh or frozen, about 200 g each; or 150 g dried)
2	spring onions, finely sliced
1	nori sheet, torn (optional)
1	Lion-marked egg, soft-boiled, halved (optional)

1. Heat the dashi in a pan with the soy sauce, sugar and vinegar until steaming. Taste: it should be savoury with a hint of sweetness. Add a little more soy sauce if it is bland.
2. Cook the udon in a separate pan of boiling water: fresh or frozen usually 1 to 3 minutes, dried 8 to 12 minutes, or as the pack says. Drain.
3. Divide the noodles between two bowls and ladle over the very hot broth. Top with the spring onions, nori and egg.

HOT BROTH 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.

Dashi: instant dashi granules and bonito flakes contain fish. For a vegetarian or fish-free broth, soak a 10 cm piece of kombu (dried seaweed) in 600 ml of cold water for 30 minutes, then heat it gently and remove it just before it boils (a rolling boil makes it bitter and slimy).

Allergens: Worcestershire sauce contains anchovy (fish) and often barley malt vinegar (gluten);

Japanese curry roux usually contains wheat and sometimes milk; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; udon and ramen contain wheat; mayonnaise contains egg. Check labels, and use soy sauce or a vegetarian roux for a fish-free or vegetarian dish.

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.

LEVEL 2 · CURRY

Curry udon

30 minutes | 2 portions | using a curry roux to thicken a broth

A thick, mild, savoury curry broth with udon: a comfort dish in Japan. The roux block does the thickening and seasoning. Cook the chicken properly before adding the roux.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

600 ml	dashi or chicken stock
40 g	Japanese curry roux (about 2 cubes; check the label)
1	onion, thinly sliced
150 g	chicken thigh, thinly sliced
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
2	portions of udon (about 200 g each)
2	spring onions, sliced
1 tsp	soy sauce, to taste

1. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the onion for 5 minutes until soft. Add the chicken and cook for **5 to 6 minutes**, until browned and cooked through with no pink.
2. Add the dashi or stock and bring to a simmer. Turn the heat down, break in the roux and stir until it dissolves, then simmer gently for 5 minutes until the sauce thickens.
3. Meanwhile, cook the udon, and drain.
4. Taste the broth and add soy sauce if needed. Put the udon in bowls, ladle over the hot curry broth and top with spring onions.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT CURRY AND ALLERGENS

Raw pork and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

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: Worcestershire sauce contains anchovy (fish) and often barley malt vinegar (gluten); Japanese curry roux usually contains wheat and sometimes milk; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; udon and ramen contain wheat; mayonnaise contains egg. Check labels, and use soy sauce or a vegetarian roux for a fish-free or vegetarian dish.

LEVEL 2 · STIR-FRY

Yakisoba

25 minutes | 2 portions | stir-frying noodles with a sweet-sour-savoury sauce

Yakisoba are fried noodles with cabbage and pork in a tangy, sweet sauce. Mix the sauce first. See Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 2 for the stir-fry order of work.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

300 g	fresh yakisoba or ramen noodles (or 200 g dried egg noodles)
150 g	thinly sliced pork or chicken (or 150 g mushrooms and tofu)
2 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
200 g	white cabbage, shredded
1	carrot, in matchsticks
1	onion, thinly sliced
2 tbsp	Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp	tomato ketchup
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
1	nori sheet and a little mayonnaise, to serve (optional)

1. Mix the Worcestershire sauce, ketchup, soy sauce and sugar in a bowl. Loosen the noodles with a splash of hot water or a short boil, and drain.
2. Heat half the oil in a large pan over a high heat. Fry the pork for **3 to 4 minutes** until browned and cooked through with no pink. Take out.
3. Add the remaining oil and stir-fry the onion, carrot and cabbage for 3 minutes until just tender. Add the noodles and pork and toss for 2 minutes.
4. Pour in the sauce and toss for 1 minute until glossy and hot. Serve topped with nori and a little mayonnaise.

HOT PAN, RAW MEAT AND ALLERGENS

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.

Raw pork and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

Allergens: Worcestershire sauce contains anchovy (fish) and often barley malt vinegar (gluten); Japanese curry roux usually contains wheat and sometimes milk; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; udon and ramen contain wheat; mayonnaise contains egg. Check labels, and use soy sauce or a vegetarian roux for a fish-free or vegetarian dish.

LEVEL 3 · COLD

Cold ramen salad (hiyashi chuka)

30 minutes | 2 portions | arranging a cold noodle plate with a sweet-sour dressing

A summer favourite in Japan: chilled ramen noodles on a plate with colourful toppings and a tangy soy-vinegar dressing. The arrangement is part of the dish. See Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 4 for the cold-noodle method.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	ramen noodles
2	Lion-marked eggs, beaten, for the omelette strips
1 tsp	vegetable oil
½	cucumber, in matchsticks
2	tomatoes, sliced
100 g	cooked ham or cooked chicken, in strips
1 tbsp	pickled ginger (optional)
4 tbsp	soy sauce, for the dressing
3 tbsp	rice vinegar, for the dressing
2 tbsp	sugar, for the dressing
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil, for the dressing
4 tbsp	water, for the dressing

1. Stir the soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, sesame oil and water together until the sugar dissolves. Chill.
2. Whisk the eggs with a pinch of salt. Heat the oil in a non-stick pan and pour in a thin layer of egg, cooking each omelette for about 1 minute until fully set. Roll, cool and slice into thin strips.
3. Cook the ramen for a minute under the pack time, rinse under cold water until cold and drain very well.
4. Divide the noodles between two plates and arrange the egg, cucumber, tomato, ham and ginger in sections on top. Pour over the dressing just before eating.

COLD DISHES, EGGS 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.

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: Worcestershire sauce contains anchovy (fish) and often barley malt vinegar (gluten); Japanese curry roux usually contains wheat and sometimes milk; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; udon and ramen contain wheat; mayonnaise contains egg. Check labels, and use soy sauce or a vegetarian roux for a fish-free or vegetarian dish.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Broth strength

Weak or strong.

1. Make kake broth with 2 tbsp, 3 tbsp and 4 tbsp of soy sauce in 600 ml of dashi. Taste each with a noodle.

Look for: The weakest broth tastes watery; the strongest tastes harsh and salty. Note the middle point. The noodles dilute the broth, so season it slightly stronger than you think.

EXPERIMENT

Fresh, vacuum-packed or dried

Udon types.

1. Cook frozen, vacuum-packed and dried udon in the same broth. Compare.

Look for: Frozen udon is soft and bouncy, vacuum-packed udon is similar but slightly softer, and dried udon is firmer and chewier. Pick your favourite.

EXPERIMENT

Yakisoba sauce balance

Sweet or sharp.

1. Make two small portions of yakisoba sauce, one with extra sugar and one with extra Worcestershire sauce. Toss with noodles.

Look for: More sugar makes a sweet, sticky dish. More Worcestershire sauce makes a tangy, savoury one. The right balance is a matter of taste.

EXPERIMENT

Cold salad dressing

With and without sugar.

1. Make the hiyashi chuka dressing with and without the sugar. Taste on a noodle.

Look for: Without sugar, the dressing is sharp and thin. The sugar rounds it out and makes it coat the noodles. Cold food needs more seasoning than hot.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Kake udon				
Curry udon				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Yakisoba				
Cold ramen salad				
Broth strength				
Udon types				
Yakisoba sauce				
Cold dressing				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Bland broth	Not enough soy sauce or dashi	Add soy sauce a teaspoon at a time; taste with noodles
Too salty	Strong dashi powder and soy sauce	Dilute with water; use less soy sauce
Mushy udon	Overcooked	Cook for the minimum time on the pack
Yakisoba soggy	Cabbage or noodles wet, or pan crowded	Dry the vegetables; use a hot pan; cook in batches
Curry broth lumpy	Roux added to boiling liquid	Turn the heat down; break the roux in and stir
Cold ramen clumped	Not rinsed or drained	Rinse in cold water; drain; toss with a drop of oil

HOT DISHES, RAW MEAT, 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.

Raw pork and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

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.

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: Worcestershire sauce contains anchovy (fish) and often barley malt vinegar (gluten); Japanese curry roux usually contains wheat and sometimes milk; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; udon and ramen contain wheat; mayonnaise contains egg. Check labels, and use soy sauce or a vegetarian roux for a fish-free or vegetarian dish.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can make a simple dashi-based broth and season it.
- ☐ I can cook udon and match it to a dish.
- ☐ I can stir-fry yakisoba with a balanced sauce.
- ☐ I can build a cold ramen plate.
- ☐ I check labels for fish, wheat and soy.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 4 is Korean Noodles: sweet, spicy and savoury sauces and glass noodles.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 4 · Korean Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Balance sweet, salty, spicy, nutty and tangy flavours and cook glass noodles, cold spicy noodles, black bean noodles and a light banquet broth.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Korean cooking is built on **balance**: sweet, salty, spicy, nutty and tangy flavours, seasoned together and adjusted a little at a time. Its noodle dishes range from slippery sweet-potato glass noodles to spicy cold noodles, glossy black bean sauce and a light banquet broth.



Figure 4. The Korean balance. Taste the sauce and adjust one flavour at a time.

The key ingredients

INGREDIENT	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT DOES
Gochujang	Fermented chilli paste (sweet, spicy, savoury)	The base of spicy sauces; contains soy and often wheat
Gochugaru	Korean chilli flakes	Heat and colour, milder than most chilli flakes
Chunjang	Fermented black bean paste	Jjajangmyeon; fry it first to remove bitterness

INGREDIENT	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT DOES
Sesame oil and seeds	Toasted, nutty	Added at the end for aroma
Dangmyeon	Sweet potato starch glass noodles	Chewy and slippery, for japchae

The method

- **Make the sauce first and taste it** by itself, then adjust: sugar for sweet, vinegar for tang, gochujang or gochugaru for heat, soy sauce for salt.
- **Cook each vegetable separately** for japchae, so each keeps its own colour and texture.
- **Cook the paste** in oil for jjajangmyeon: raw paste is bitter.
- **Season glass noodles while warm,** because they absorb flavour best then.

CHILLI, HOT OIL, RAW MEAT AND ALLERGENS

Chilli: gochugaru and gochujang are hot. Wash your hands after handling chilli and keep them away from your eyes. Add heat a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out.

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.

Raw pork, beef and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

Allergens and labels: gochujang and black bean paste (chunjang) are fermented pastes that usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame oil and seeds are a common allergen; anchovy broth contains fish; eggs are an allergen. Check labels, and use the vegetarian swaps given.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Japchae (glass noodle stir-fry)

35 minutes | 3 portions | cooking glass noodles and seasoning them while warm

Chewy, slippery, sweet and savoury glass noodles with colourful vegetables. Cook each vegetable separately so each keeps its colour and taste. Eat warm or at room temperature.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

150 g	sweet potato starch glass noodles (dangmyeon)
1 tbsp	vegetable oil, plus 1 tsp for the noodles
1	carrot, in matchsticks
1	onion, thinly sliced
150 g	spinach
100 g	mushrooms, sliced
3 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil
2	garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp	toasted sesame seeds
150 g	beef, thinly sliced (optional; leave out for vegetarian)

1. Mix the soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil and garlic for the seasoning.
2. Boil the glass noodles for **5 to 7 minutes**, or as the pack says, until soft and chewy. Drain, rinse briefly, cut a few times with scissors and toss with 1 tsp oil and a third of the seasoning.
3. Stir-fry the carrot, then the onion, then the mushrooms in a little oil, each for 2 to 3 minutes, and set aside. Wilt the spinach in boiling water for 30 seconds, squeeze dry and season with a pinch of salt.
4. If using beef, stir-fry it separately for **3 to 4 minutes** until browned and cooked through with no pink.

5. Toss everything with the noodles and the remaining seasoning. Taste, adjust and scatter with sesame seeds.

HOT OIL, RAW MEAT AND ALLERGENS

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.

Raw pork, beef and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

Allergens and labels: gochujang and black bean paste (chunjang) are fermented pastes that usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame oil and seeds are a common allergen; anchovy broth contains fish; eggs are an allergen. Check labels, and use the vegetarian swaps given.

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.

LEVEL 2 · COLD

Bibim guksu (spicy cold noodles)

25 minutes | 2 portions | balancing a spicy, sweet and tangy cold sauce

Cold noodles tossed in a bright red sauce, with crunchy cucumber and a boiled egg. Taste the sauce on its own first: it should be spicy, sweet, sour and salty in balance. See Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 4 for the cold-noodle method.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	thin wheat noodles (somen or similar)
2 tbsp	gochujang
1 tbsp	gochugaru (Korean chilli flakes; optional)
2 tbsp	rice vinegar
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil
1	garlic clove, finely grated
½	cucumber, in matchsticks
1	pear or apple, in matchsticks (optional)
2	Lion-marked eggs, hard-boiled, halved
1 tbsp	toasted sesame seeds

1. Stir the gochujang, gochugaru, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil and garlic together. Taste and adjust: more sugar for sweetness, vinegar for tang, gochugaru for heat.
2. Hard-boil the eggs for 10 minutes, cool in cold water and halve.
3. Cook the noodles as the pack says (usually 2 to 4 minutes), rinse under cold water until cold and drain very well.
4. Toss the noodles with the sauce, divide between bowls and top with cucumber, pear, egg and sesame seeds.

COLD DISHES, CHILLI, EGGS 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.

Chilli: gochugaru and gochujang are hot. Wash your hands after handling chilli and keep them away from your eyes. Add heat a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out.

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 and labels: gochujang and black bean paste (chunjang) are fermented pastes that usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame oil and seeds are a common allergen; anchovy broth contains fish; eggs are an allergen. Check labels, and use the vegetarian swaps given.

LEVEL 3 · SAUCE

Jjajangmyeon (black bean noodles)

50 minutes | 3 portions | frying a paste to remove bitterness and thicken a sauce

A dark, glossy, savoury-sweet sauce of pork and vegetables over thick noodles. The paste is fried in oil first, which makes it smoother and less bitter.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	fresh or dried wheat noodles (thick, udon-style)
200 g	pork belly or shoulder, in small cubes
1	onion, diced
1	courgette, diced
½	potato, small diced
3 tbsp	chunjang (Korean black bean paste), or the labelled substitute
3 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tbsp	cornflour mixed with 3 tbsp cold water
250 ml	water or stock
½	cucumber, in matchsticks, to serve

1. Heat 2 tbsp of the oil in a pan over a medium heat and fry the black bean paste for **2 to 3 minutes**, stirring, until it smells toasty. Scrape into a bowl.
2. Add the remaining oil and fry the pork for **6 to 8 minutes** until browned and cooked through with no pink. Add the onion, courgette and potato and fry for 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the fried paste, sugar and the water or stock. Simmer for 10 minutes until the potato is tender, stirring.
4. Stir the cornflour mixture and add it to the simmering sauce, stirring until thick and glossy, about 1 minute.
5. Cook the noodles as the pack says and drain. Pour the sauce over the noodles and top with cucumber.

HOT OIL, RAW PORK, HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

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.

Raw pork, beef and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

Substitute: real chunjang (Korean black bean paste) is sold in Asian supermarkets. If you can't find it, use a dark Chinese black bean sauce mixed with a little dark soy sauce and sugar: it is not the same, but it makes a good dish.

Allergens and labels: gochujang and black bean paste (chunjang) are fermented pastes that usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame oil and seeds are a common allergen; anchovy broth contains fish; eggs are an allergen. Check labels, and use the vegetarian swaps given.

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.

LEVEL 3 · BROTH

Janchi guksu (anchovy broth noodles)

45 minutes | 3 portions | making a clean, light broth and topping it with colourful strips

'Banquet noodles': thin noodles in a light, clean anchovy and kombu broth, topped with egg and vegetable strips and a spoon of seasoning sauce. A quiet, elegant bowl.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

1	piece of kombu (about 10 cm)
10	dried anchovies, heads and guts removed (or use vegetable stock for a fish-free version)
1.2 litres	water
1 tbsp	soy sauce
½ tsp	salt
200 g	thin wheat noodles (somen)
1	courgette, in matchsticks
1	carrot, in matchsticks
2	Lion-marked eggs, made into thin omelette strips
2	spring onions, sliced
1 batch	soy sauce, 1 tsp sesame oil, 1 tsp gochugaru and 1 crushed garlic clove, for the seasoning sauce

1. Simmer the kombu and anchovies in the water for **15 minutes**, taking out the kombu after 10 (so it doesn't turn bitter). Strain, then season with the soy sauce and salt.
2. Make the omelette strips (Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 3), cooking each omelette for about 1 minute until fully set. Quickly fry the courgette and carrot for 1 to 2 minutes each.
3. Mix the seasoning sauce: soy sauce, sesame oil, gochugaru and garlic.
4. Cook the noodles, rinse and drain, then divide between bowls. Add the toppings, ladle over the very hot broth and add a spoonful of seasoning sauce.

HOT BROTH, EGGS, FISH 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.

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 and labels: gochujang and black bean paste (chunjang) are fermented pastes that usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame oil and seeds are a common allergen; anchovy broth contains fish; eggs are an allergen. Check labels, and use the vegetarian swaps given.

Broth and leftovers: cool broth quickly, keep it covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** and reheat until steaming hot, once only. Keep noodles apart from the broth.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Gochujang amount

A little or a lot.

1. Make the bibim guksu sauce with 1 tbsp, 2 tbsp and 3 tbsp of gochujang. Toss each with a spoonful of noodles.

Look for: The smallest amount is mild and pale; the largest is thick, sweet and fiery. Remember that heat builds as you eat.

EXPERIMENT

Cooking the sauce

Raw paste or fried.

1. Fry half of the chunjang in oil for 2 minutes and leave half raw. Stir each into a spoon of hot water and taste.

Look for: The fried paste is smoother and toastier; the raw paste tastes harsh and bitter. That is why the first step matters.

EXPERIMENT

Glass noodle soak or boil

Two methods.

1. Soak one batch of glass noodles in hot water for 20 minutes and boil another for 6 minutes. Compare.

Look for: Boiled noodles are soft, chewy and slippery. Soaked ones are often firmer and can be uneven. Boiling is usually more reliable.

EXPERIMENT

Sugar and sesame

Seasoning at the end.

1. Make japchae with and without the sugar and the sesame oil. Taste.

Look for: Without sugar the dish is salty and flat. Without sesame oil it lacks aroma. These two small additions complete the balance.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Japchae				
Bibim guksu				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Jjajangmyeon				
Janchi guksu				
Gochujang amount				
Fried or raw paste				
Soak or boil				
Sugar and sesame				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Glass noodles clump	Not tossed with oil, or left to cool	Toss with a little oil and some seasoning while warm
Too spicy	Too much gochujang or gochugaru	Add sugar, vinegar and more noodles or cucumber; use less next time
Bitter black bean sauce	Paste not fried	Fry the paste in oil for 2 to 3 minutes first
Sauce too thin	Not enough thickener or simmer time	Add a little more cornflour mixture and simmer for a minute
Bland broth	Too little salt or anchovy	Season with a little more soy sauce or salt; simmer longer
Bitter kombu broth	Boiled too long	Take out the kombu after 10 minutes

HOT OIL, CHILLI, RAW MEAT, EGGS AND ALLERGENS

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.

Chilli: gochugaru and gochujang are hot. Wash your hands after handling chilli and keep them away from your eyes. Add heat a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out.

Raw pork, beef and chicken: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook it until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Slice meat thinly so it cooks fast.

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.

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 and labels: gochujang and black bean paste (chunjang) are fermented pastes that usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame oil and seeds are a common allergen; anchovy broth contains fish; eggs are an allergen. Check labels, and use the vegetarian swaps given.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can balance sweet, salty, spicy, nutty and tangy flavours.
- ☐ I can cook glass noodles and season them while warm.
- ☐ I can fry a paste to make a smooth sauce.
- ☐ I can make a clean anchovy or vegetable broth.
- ☐ I check labels for soy, wheat, fish and sesame.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 5 is Chinese Regional Noodles: Sichuan numbing heat, northern fried sauces and home-style dishes.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 5 · Chinese Regional Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Cook four Chinese noodle dishes built on sauces, layering numbing, hot, savoury and sour flavours.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

China has many noodle traditions. This chapter cooks four from different regions: **Sichuan's numbing and hot flavours, the north's fried bean sauces, a simple home-style dish and a dry-spiced wok noodle from the north-west**. Each one rests on a sauce, not a broth.



Figure 5. Sichuan flavour is layered: numbing, hot, savoury and sour, with a little sweetness to balance.

The flavour vocabulary

INGREDIENT	WHAT IT IS	NOTES
Sichuan pepper	Dried berries that make the mouth tingle	Toast and grind; numbing, not hot
Doubanjiang	Fermented chilli and broad bean paste	Fry it in oil first; contains soy and often wheat
Sweet bean sauce	Sweet, salty fermented wheat paste	Hoisin and miso is a labelled substitute

INGREDIENT	WHAT IT IS	NOTES
Chinese black vinegar	Dark, mellow, malty vinegar	Balsamic is a labelled substitute
Chilli oil	Oil infused with chilli flakes	Use the sediment too

The method

- **Build the sauce in the bowl** for dan dan noodles, so the hot noodles and a little of their water make it glossy.
- **Fry pastes in oil** until fragrant and dark. Raw paste tastes harsh.
- **Match the noodle to the dish:** thin for thin sauces, wide and chewy for dry spiced stir-fries.
- **Add heat in layers:** chilli oil, dried chilli and Sichuan pepper each do a different job.

CHILLI, RAW MEAT, HOT OIL AND ALLERGENS

Chilli and Sichuan pepper: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Sichuan pepper makes the mouth tingle and go numb: that is normal, but use a little at a time. Dried chilli fumes in a hot pan can make you cough, so open a window.

Raw pork, beef and lamb mince: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook mince and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Thin slices of lamb are cooked through here, not left rare.

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 and labels: doubanjiang (chilli bean paste) and sweet bean sauce are fermented and usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame paste and sesame oil are sesame; peanuts and peanut butter are common allergens; noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Check labels.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Dan dan noodles

30 minutes | 2 portions | building a sauce in the bowl and layering numbing and hot flavours

A street food of Sichuan: noodles with a spicy, nutty, tangy sauce and crumbled pork. The sauce is mixed in the bottom of the bowl, then the hot noodles are tossed through it. Taste the sauce before the noodles go in.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

200 g	thin wheat noodles
150 g	pork mince
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
1 tbsp	doubanjiang (chilli bean paste; optional, for extra depth)
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	Chinese black vinegar (or balsamic vinegar as a labelled substitute)
1 tbsp	sesame paste or smooth peanut butter
2 tbsp	chilli oil, with its sediment
½ tsp	Sichuan pepper, toasted and ground
1 tsp	sugar
100 g	greens (pak choi or spinach)
2	spring onions, sliced

1. In each bowl mix the soy sauce, vinegar, sesame paste, chilli oil, ground Sichuan pepper, sugar and half the garlic. Add 3 tbsp of the noodle water later to loosen it.
2. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the pork for **5 to 6 minutes**, breaking it up, until browned and cooked through with no pink. Add the rest of the garlic and the doubanjiang and fry for 1 minute.
3. Cook the noodles as the pack says, adding the greens for the last minute. Drain, keeping a cup of the water.

4. Put the noodles on the sauce, add 3 tbsp of the water, toss until every strand is coated, then top with the pork and spring onions. Taste and add more vinegar or chilli oil.

CHILLI, RAW PORK, HOT OIL AND ALLERGENS

Chilli and Sichuan pepper: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Sichuan pepper makes the mouth tingle and go numb: that is normal, but use a little at a time. Dried chilli fumes in a hot pan can make you cough, so open a window.

Raw pork, beef and lamb mince: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook mince and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Thin slices of lamb are cooked through here, not left rare.

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 and labels: doubanjiang (chilli bean paste) and sweet bean sauce are fermented and usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame paste and sesame oil are sesame; peanuts and peanut butter are common allergens; noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Check labels.

LEVEL 2 · FRIED SAUCE

Zhajiangmian (fried sauce noodles)

40 minutes | 3 portions | frying a bean sauce until dark and glossy

A northern Chinese classic: noodles topped with a thick, salty-sweet fried meat and bean sauce, with fresh cucumber and carrot on top. The sauce keeps and tastes better the next day. Fry it patiently: the paste should lose its raw smell.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	wheat noodles
200 g	pork mince
3 tbsp	sweet bean sauce or hoisin sauce (a labelled substitute: hoisin with 1 tsp miso)
1 tbsp	doubanjiang (optional)
2 tbsp	vegetable oil
3	garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tbsp	grated fresh ginger
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	sugar
120 ml	water
½	cucumber, in matchsticks
1	carrot, in matchsticks
2	spring onions, sliced

1. Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat. Fry the garlic and ginger for 30 seconds, then add the pork and fry for **6 to 8 minutes**, breaking it up, until browned and cooked through with no pink.
2. Add the bean sauce and doubanjiang and fry for **3 to 4 minutes**, stirring, until dark and fragrant. Add the soy sauce, sugar and water.
3. Simmer gently for 10 minutes, stirring now and then, until the sauce is thick and glossy and the oil rises to the top.

4. Cook the noodles and drain. Put them in bowls, spoon over the sauce and top with cucumber, carrot and spring onions. Toss before eating.

RAW PORK, HOT OIL, HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Raw pork, beef and lamb mince: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook mince and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Thin slices of lamb are cooked through here, not left rare.

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.

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 and labels: doubanjiang (chilli bean paste) and sweet bean sauce are fermented and usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame paste and sesame oil are sesame; peanuts and peanut butter are common allergens; noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Check labels.

Substitutes: Chinese black vinegar, Sichuan preserved vegetable and sweet bean sauce can be hard to find. Balsamic vinegar and a little soy sauce can stand in for black vinegar, and hoisin sauce with a little miso can stand in for sweet bean sauce: they taste different, and I have labelled each swap in the recipe.

LEVEL 2 · HOME-STYLE

Tomato and egg noodles

25 minutes | 3 portions | making a comforting sauce from simple ingredients

A very common home dish in China: soft scrambled egg in a sweet-sour tomato sauce over noodles. The eggs are cooked until set, not runny.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

250 g	wheat or egg noodles
4	Lion-marked eggs, beaten with a pinch of salt
4	ripe tomatoes, cut in wedges (or 400 g tin of tomatoes)
2 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
2	garlic cloves, sliced
1 tbsp	tomato ketchup or tomato puree
2 tsp	sugar
1 tbsp	soy sauce
150 ml	water
2	spring onions, sliced

1. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a pan and cook the beaten eggs for about **1 minute**, stirring gently, until just set in large curds. Take out.
2. Add the remaining oil and fry the garlic for 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes, ketchup, sugar, soy sauce and water and simmer for **8 to 10 minutes**, until the tomatoes collapse into a sauce.
3. Return the eggs and stir through for 1 minute, until the eggs are firm all the way through. Taste and adjust the sugar and soy sauce.
4. Cook the noodles, drain, and put in bowls. Spoon the tomato and egg over and top with spring onion.

> **EGGS, HOT SAUCE 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 · WOK

Cumin lamb noodles

35 minutes | 3 portions | wok-frying with dry spices and high heat

A dry, smoky, spicy stir-fry from north-west China. Toast the cumin first, slice the lamb thinly so it cooks fast, and fry in two batches so it browns rather than steams. See Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 2 for the stir-fry order of work.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

300 g	wide wheat noodles
250 g	lamb leg or shoulder, thinly sliced
1 tbsp	cumin seeds, toasted and ground
1 tsp	chilli flakes
½ tsp	Sichuan pepper, toasted and ground
2 tbsp	vegetable oil
1	onion, sliced
3	garlic cloves, sliced
1	green pepper, sliced
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	Chinese black vinegar (or balsamic as a labelled substitute)
1 tsp	sugar
1 handful	coriander

1. Toast the cumin and Sichuan pepper in a dry pan for 1 minute and grind. Mix with the chilli flakes and half the soy sauce and toss the lamb in this for 15 minutes.
2. Cook the noodles, drain and toss with a drop of oil.
3. Heat 1 tbsp of oil in a wok or large pan until very hot. Fry the lamb in two batches for **2 to 3 minutes each**, until browned and cooked through. Take out.
4. Add the rest of the oil and stir-fry the onion, garlic and pepper for 2 minutes. Return the lamb, add the noodles, the rest of the soy sauce, the vinegar and the sugar, and

toss for 2 minutes. Scatter with coriander.

RAW LAMB, HOT WOK, SPICES AND CHILLI

Raw pork, beef and lamb mince: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook mince and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Thin slices of lamb are cooked through here, not left rare.

Toasting spices: whole cumin and Sichuan pepper burn in seconds. Toast in a dry pan over a medium heat for about 1 minute, shaking, and tip out as soon as they smell warm.

Chilli and Sichuan pepper: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Sichuan pepper makes the mouth tingle and go numb: that is normal, but use a little at a time. Dried chilli fumes in a hot pan can make you cough, so open a window.

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.

Substitutes: Chinese black vinegar, Sichuan preserved vegetable and sweet bean sauce can be hard to find. Balsamic vinegar and a little soy sauce can stand in for black vinegar, and hoisin sauce with a little miso can stand in for sweet bean sauce: they taste different, and I have labelled each swap in the recipe.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Sichuan pepper toasted or not

Tingle and aroma.

1. Mix a pinch of untoasted ground Sichuan pepper and a pinch of toasted into two spoons of chilli oil. Taste each on a noodle.

Look for: The toasted pepper smells floral and citrusy and numbs more strongly; the untoasted one tastes dull and a bit grassy.

EXPERIMENT

Sauce thickness

Loose or thick.

1. Toss dan dan noodles with no noodle water, 3 tbsp of it and 6 tbsp of it. Compare.

Look for: No water leaves the sauce clumpy and heavy. A little makes it glossy and clinging. Too much washes it out. Note the right amount.

EXPERIMENT

Noodle width

Thin or wide.

1. Serve zhajiangmian sauce on thin noodles and on wide noodles.

Look for: Wide noodles carry the thick sauce better and stay chewy. Thin noodles disappear under it. The sauce decides the noodle.

EXPERIMENT

Heat level

Chilli oil, a little at a time.

1. Make a bowl of dan dan noodles with 1, 2 and 3 tbsp of chilli oil.

Look for: The heat builds quickly and keeps building as you eat. Find the amount that is hot but still lets you taste the vinegar and sesame.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Dan dan noodles				
Zhajiangmian				
Tomato and egg noodles				
Cumin lamb noodles				
Sichuan pepper				
Sauce thickness				
Noodle width				
Heat level				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce clumpy	No noodle water	Add a few spoonfuls of the cooking water and toss
Too hot	Too much chilli oil	Add vinegar, sugar and more noodles; use less next time
Bitter fried sauce	Paste burnt	Fry on a medium heat and stir; add a splash of water
Tomato sauce thin or sour	Not simmered, or under-ripe tomatoes	Simmer longer; add sugar a pinch at a time
Grey, stewed lamb	Crowded pan	Fry in batches in a very hot pan
Numb and bitter	Too much Sichuan pepper, or burnt	Use half a teaspoon; toast gently

CHILLI, RAW MEAT, EGGS, HOT OIL AND ALLERGENS

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Raw pork, beef and lamb mince: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook mince and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes). Thin slices of lamb are cooked through here, not left rare.

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 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 and labels: doubanjiang (chilli bean paste) and sweet bean sauce are fermented and usually contain soy and often wheat; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame paste and sesame oil are sesame; peanuts and peanut butter are common allergens; noodles contain wheat and sometimes egg. Check labels.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can build a sauce in the bowl and toss noodles through it.
- ☐ I can fry a bean paste until dark and fragrant.
- ☐ I can toast and grind Sichuan pepper and cumin.
- ☐ I can cook minced and sliced meat through with no pink.
- ☐ I check labels for soy, wheat, sesame and peanuts.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 6 is Thai and South-East Asian Noodles: pastes, wok heat and sweet-salty-sour balance.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 6 · Thai and South-East Asian Noodles

SKILL GOAL

Fry pastes, stir-fry noodles over a high heat and balance sweet, salty, sour and hot in four South-East Asian dishes.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

The noodle dishes of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are built on **pastes fried in oil, very hot woks and a balance of sweet, salty, sour and hot**. The seasoning is adjusted at the end, by taste.

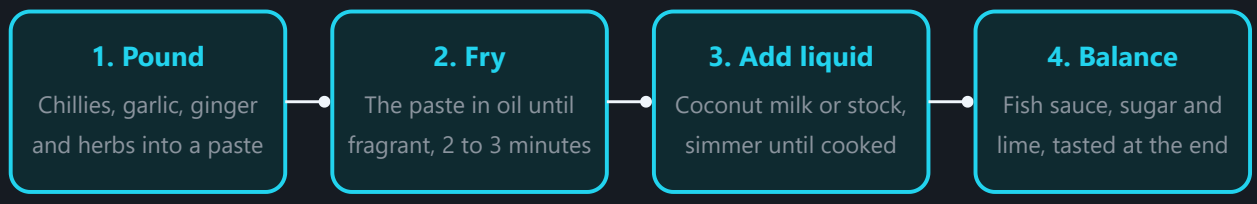


Figure 6. Pastes are fried first to release their flavour. The balance of salty, sweet and sour comes last.

The key ingredients

INGREDIENT	WHAT IT IS	NOTES
Fish sauce	Salty, savoury fermented fish sauce	Fish allergen; soy sauce is a vegetarian swap
Oyster sauce	Sweet, savoury sauce	Shellfish allergen; mushroom sauce is a swap
Curry paste	Chillies, galangal, lemongrass, spices	Check for shrimp paste (shellfish)
Kecap manis	Thick, sweet Indonesian soy sauce	Soy sauce plus sugar is a labelled substitute

INGREDIENT	WHAT IT IS	NOTES
Thai basil	Anise-scented basil	Add at the very end

The method

- **Fry the paste** in oil for 2 to 3 minutes before adding liquid.
- **Get the pan very hot** for stir-fries, and cook in small batches so the noodles char rather than steam.
- **Mix the sauce first** and taste it, because the cooking is over in minutes.
- **Balance at the end:** salty (fish sauce), sweet (sugar), sour (lime) and hot (chilli).

HOT WOK, CHILLI, RAW MEAT AND ALLERGENS

Wok heat: a very hot wok can make oil flare. Have every ingredient ready before you start, keep a lid nearby to smother any fire (never water), and keep the extractor fan on.

Chilli: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Add them a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out. A very hot pan with chilli can make the air sting, so open a window.

Raw chicken, pork and prawns: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat or prawns, and keep them away from cooked food. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes), and prawns until pink and opaque all through.

Allergens: fish sauce contains fish; oyster sauce contains shellfish and often wheat; shrimp paste and some curry pastes contain shellfish; peanuts are common in mee goreng and as a topping; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; eggs and noodles are allergens. Check the labels on pastes and sauces.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Pad see ew

30 minutes | 2 portions | stir-frying wide noodles over a high heat so they char without breaking

Wide, soft rice noodles charred in a very hot pan with chicken, greens and egg in a dark, sweet soy sauce. Cook in one batch for two, and don't stir too much, so the noodles catch and char. See Cooking Skills: Noodles 1, chapter 2 for the stir-fry method.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

250 g	wide flat rice noodles (fresh, or dried and soaked)
200 g	chicken breast or thigh, thinly sliced (or firm tofu)
2 tbsp	vegetable oil, divided
3	garlic cloves, finely chopped
2	Lion-marked eggs
150 g	Chinese broccoli (gai lan) or broccoli, in pieces
1 tbsp	dark soy sauce
1 tbsp	light soy sauce
1 tbsp	oyster sauce (or mushroom sauce)
1 tsp	sugar

1. Mix the dark and light soy sauces, oyster sauce and sugar. If the noodles are stuck together, loosen them gently with your hands or a splash of hot water.
2. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a large pan or wok until very hot. Fry the chicken for **3 to 4 minutes** until cooked through with no pink. Add the garlic for 20 seconds. Push to one side.
3. Crack the eggs into the pan and scramble until fully set, about 1 minute. Add the broccoli and 2 tbsp of water and stir-fry for 2 minutes.
4. Add the remaining oil and the noodles and sauce. Toss gently, letting the noodles sit for 20 to 30 seconds between tosses so they char. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until hot and glossy.

> **HOT WOK, RAW CHICKEN, EGGS AND ALLERGENS**

Wok heat: a very hot wok can make oil flare. Have every ingredient ready before you start, keep a lid nearby to smother any fire (never water), and keep the extractor fan on.

Raw chicken, pork and prawns: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat or prawns, and keep them away from cooked food. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes), and prawns until pink and opaque all through.

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: fish sauce contains fish; oyster sauce contains shellfish and often wheat; shrimp paste and some curry pastes contain shellfish; peanuts are common in mee goreng and as a topping; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; eggs and noodles are allergens. Check the labels on pastes and sauces.

LEVEL 2 · SPICY

Pad kee mao (spicy basil noodles)

30 minutes | 2 portions | frying a fresh paste of garlic and chilli and adding basil at the end

'Drunkard's noodles' (made without alcohol here): a hot, savoury, aromatic stir-fry. The basil goes in at the very end so it keeps its perfume.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

250 g	fresh rice noodles or dried egg noodles
200 g	chicken or pork mince
2 tbsp	vegetable oil
4	garlic cloves, roughly chopped
2	red chillies, sliced (use fewer for less heat)
150 g	green beans, in 3 cm pieces
1	red pepper, sliced
1 tbsp	oyster sauce
1 tbsp	light soy sauce
1 tbsp	fish sauce (or soy sauce)
1 tsp	sugar

1 large handful basil leaves (holy basil, or Thai basil as a labelled substitute)

1. Pound or chop the garlic and chillies together into a rough paste. Mix the oyster sauce, soy sauce, fish sauce and sugar.
2. Heat the oil in a hot wok and fry the mince for **4 to 5 minutes**, breaking it up, until browned and cooked through with no pink.
3. Add the garlic and chilli paste and fry for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the beans and pepper and fry for 2 minutes.
4. Add the noodles and sauce and toss for 2 minutes. Turn off the heat, add the basil, toss for 10 seconds until just wilted and serve.

CHILLI, HOT WOK, RAW MEAT AND ALLERGENS

Chilli: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Add them a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out. A very hot pan with chilli can make the air sting, so open a window.

Wok heat: a very hot wok can make oil flare. Have every ingredient ready before you start, keep a lid nearby to smother any fire (never water), and keep the extractor fan on.

Raw chicken, pork and prawns: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat or prawns, and keep them away from cooked food. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes), and prawns until pink and opaque all through.

Allergens: fish sauce contains fish; oyster sauce contains shellfish and often wheat; shrimp paste and some curry pastes contain shellfish; peanuts are common in mee goreng and as a topping; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; eggs and noodles are allergens. Check the labels on pastes and sauces.

Substitute: Thai holy basil is hard to find outside specialist shops. Ordinary Thai basil or Italian basil is a labelled substitute: it is sweeter and less peppery, so the dish will taste a little different.

LEVEL 2 · CURRY SOUP

Khao soi (curry noodle soup)

45 minutes | 3 portions | frying a curry paste and building a rich coconut broth

A northern Thai coconut curry soup with chicken and egg noodles. Frying the paste in the thick top of the coconut milk is the key step.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

2 tbsp	red curry paste (check the label for shrimp paste)
1 tsp	ground turmeric
1 tbsp	vegetable oil
400 ml	tin of coconut milk
400 ml	chicken or vegetable stock
300 g	chicken thighs, in pieces
1 tbsp	fish sauce (or soy sauce)
1 tsp	sugar
200 g	egg noodles
1	lime, in wedges
2	spring onions, sliced
1 tbsp	crispy fried shallots or crushed peanuts, to serve

1. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the curry paste and turmeric for **2 minutes**. Spoon the thick top of the coconut milk in and fry for 2 more minutes, until the oil separates.
2. Add the chicken and stir for 2 minutes. Pour in the rest of the coconut milk and the stock, bring to a gentle simmer and cook for **20 minutes**, until the chicken is cooked through with no pink.
3. Season with the fish sauce and sugar. Taste: it should be rich, savoury, a little sweet and fragrant.
4. Cook the noodles separately and drain. Put in bowls, ladle over the hot soup and add lime, spring onion and the crisp topping.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT SOUP, COCONUT AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken, pork and prawns: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat or prawns, and keep them away from cooked food. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes), and prawns until pink and opaque all through.

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.

Coconut milk dishes: keep leftovers covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** and reheat until steaming hot, once only. Don't let a coconut curry boil hard or it can split.

Allergens: fish sauce contains fish; oyster sauce contains shellfish and often wheat; shrimp paste and some curry pastes contain shellfish; peanuts are common in mee goreng and as a topping; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; eggs and noodles are allergens. Check the labels on pastes and sauces.

LEVEL 3 · STREET FOOD

Mee goreng

35 minutes | 2 portions | balancing sweet, spicy and savoury in one pan

A Malaysian and Indonesian fried noodle dish: sweet, spicy, savoury and a little smoky. Everything goes in quickly, so have it all ready. Taste the sauce before the noodles go in.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

250 g	fresh yellow egg noodles (or 200 g dried)
150 g	cooked chicken or firm tofu, cubed
2 tbsp	vegetable oil
1	onion, sliced
3	garlic cloves, chopped
1	potato, boiled until soft and cubed
2	Lion-marked eggs
2 tbsp	ketchup
2 tbsp	sweet soy sauce (kecap manis) or soy sauce with 1 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp	chilli sauce or sambal
1	tomato, in wedges
100 g	choy sum or cabbage, shredded
1	lime and a handful of crushed peanuts, to serve

1. Mix the ketchup, sweet soy sauce and chilli sauce. Cook the noodles for 2 minutes in boiling water, drain and toss with a drop of oil.
2. Heat the oil in a very hot wok and fry the onion and garlic for 2 minutes. Add the cooked chicken or tofu and the potato and stir for 2 minutes.
3. Push to one side, scramble the eggs until fully set, add the tomato and greens and stir-fry for 2 minutes.
4. Add the noodles and sauce and toss for 2 to 3 minutes until hot and glossy. Serve with lime and peanuts.

HOT WOK, EGGS, CHILLI AND ALLERGENS

Wok heat: a very hot wok can make oil flare. Have every ingredient ready before you start, keep a lid nearby to smother any fire (never water), and keep the extractor fan on.

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.

Chilli: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Add them a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out. A very hot pan with chilli can make the air sting, so open a window.

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Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Wok heat

Hot or hot enough.

1. Stir-fry two small portions of pad see ew noodles, one in a very hot pan and one on a medium heat.

Look for: The hot pan chars the noodles and gives a smoky taste. The medium pan steams them and they go soft and pale.

EXPERIMENT

Soy and sugar

Dark and sweet.

1. Make pad see ew sauce with and without the dark soy sauce and the sugar. Toss with noodles.

Look for: The dark soy gives colour and a deep, almost caramel taste; the sugar balances the salt. Without them the dish is pale and flat.

EXPERIMENT

Basil early or late

When to add it.

1. Add basil to one pad kee mao portion at the start and another after the heat is off.

Look for: Early basil turns dark and loses its perfume. Late basil stays green and fragrant. Add it last.

EXPERIMENT

Paste fried or raw

Curry paste.

1. Stir a spoon of curry paste into hot coconut milk raw, and fry another in oil for 2 minutes first. Taste both.

Look for: The fried paste is rounder, deeper and fragrant. The raw paste tastes harsh and sharp. Always fry the paste.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Pad see ew				
Pad kee mao				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Khao soi				
Mee goreng				
Wok heat				
Soy and sugar				
Basil timing				
Fried paste				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Noodles broken or mushy	Over-stirred, or soaked too long	Handle gently; soak only until pliable
Pale and steamed	Pan not hot or too crowded	Heat the pan fully; cook in smaller batches
Too salty	Too much fish or soy sauce	Add lime and sugar; serve with plain noodles or rice
Curry broth split	Boiled too hard	Simmer gently; whisk in a splash of stock
Bland curry	Paste not fried	Fry the paste for 2 to 3 minutes before adding liquid
Bitter basil	Cooked too long	Add at the end, off the heat

HOT WOK, CHILLI, RAW MEAT, EGGS AND ALLERGENS

Wok heat: a very hot wok can make oil flare. Have every ingredient ready before you start, keep a lid nearby to smother any fire (never water), and keep the extractor fan on.

Chilli: chillies burn skin and eyes, so wash your hands after handling them or wear gloves, and don't touch your face. Add them a little at a time: you can add more but you can't take it out. A very hot pan with chilli can make the air sting, so open a window.

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prawns, and keep them away from cooked food. Cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes), and prawns until pink and opaque all through.

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: fish sauce contains fish; oyster sauce contains shellfish and often wheat; shrimp paste and some curry pastes contain shellfish; peanuts are common in mee goreng and as a topping; soy sauce contains soy and wheat; eggs and noodles are allergens. Check the labels on pastes and sauces.

Coconut milk dishes: keep leftovers covered in the fridge, eat within **1 day** and reheat until steaming hot, once only. Don't let a coconut curry boil hard or it can split.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can fry a paste and build a coconut broth.
- ☐ I can stir-fry noodles in a very hot pan without breaking them.
- ☐ I can mix and taste a sauce before cooking.
- ☐ I balance salty, sweet, sour and hot at the end.
- ☐ I check labels for fish, shellfish, soy, wheat and peanuts.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 7 is Toppings, Pickles and Crisp Extras: the finishing touches that make a bowl.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 7 · Toppings, Pickles and Crisp Extras

SKILL GOAL

Make four toppings that finish a noodle bowl, and choose them for contrast and for how well they keep.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A bowl of noodles becomes a meal with **a few small finishing touches**: something soft (a marinated egg), something sharp (a pickle), something crisp (fried shallots) and something rich (slow-cooked pork or tofu). Most can be made ahead.

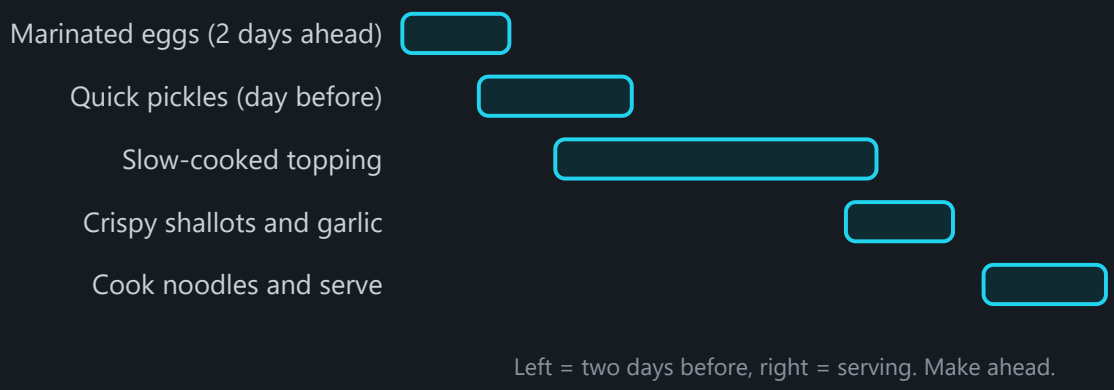


Figure 7. A topping plan. Eggs and pickles are made ahead; the crisp extras are made last.

Choosing toppings

TOPPING	TEXTURE	BEST WITH	KEEPS
Marinated egg	Soft and savoury	Ramen, rice, salads	2 days in the fridge
Quick pickles	Sharp and crunchy	Rich or fried noodles	1 week in the fridge

TOPPING	TEXTURE	BEST WITH	KEEPS
Crispy shallots and garlic	Crisp and sweet	Soups, curries, cold noodles	3 to 4 days in a jar
Soy pork or tofu	Soft and rich	Plain broths and noodles	2 days in the fridge

The rules

- **Contrast is the point:** choose one soft, one sharp and one crisp topping.
- **Make the slow things ahead:** eggs, pickles and braised toppings improve overnight.
- **Make the crisp things last,** so they stay crisp.
- **Don't overload:** three or four toppings is enough. The noodles and broth should still taste of themselves.

EGGS, HOT OIL, KEEPING AND ALLERGENS

Marinated eggs: use Lion-marked eggs, cook them for the set time, cool them in cold water and keep them in their marinade in a covered container in the fridge. Eat within about **2 days** (general guidance, I haven't found an official time for marinated eggs). A jammy yolk is not fully cooked: check current FSA advice on runny eggs, and cook the eggs for 10 minutes until solid for pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell.

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.

Slow-cooked toppings: cool them within about 1 to 2 hours (shallow container), keep covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze them, and reheat until steaming hot, once only. Cook pork until tender and no pink, and the juices run clear.

Allergens: soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame seeds and oil are sesame; eggs are an allergen; tofu is soy; some pickling ingredients contain mustard seed. Fried shallots are usually wheat-free but check shop-bought ones, which may be coated in flour.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Marinated soft eggs

20 minutes plus 4 to 12 hours marinating | 4 eggs | boiling eggs to a set time and marinating them

The soft, savoury, glossy egg on a ramen bowl. It is the easiest topping and the one that makes a bowl look right. The timing matters: use a timer.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	Lion-marked eggs
4 tbsp	soy sauce
4 tbsp	water
1 tbsp	sugar
1 tbsp	rice vinegar
1	garlic clove, lightly crushed
1	slice of fresh ginger
1	zip-top bag or small container

1. Mix the soy sauce, water, sugar, vinegar, garlic and ginger in a bag or container.
2. Lower the eggs gently into boiling water and cook for **6 and a half minutes** for a jammy yolk, or **10 minutes** for a solid one. Cool at once in cold water for 5 minutes.
3. Peel under cold water, put into the marinade (turn them or use a bag so they are covered) and chill for 4 to 12 hours.
4. Halve to serve. Keep any leftover in the marinade in the fridge and eat within 2 days.

EGGS, KEEPING AND ALLERGENS

Marinated eggs: use Lion-marked eggs, cook them for the set time, cool them in cold water and keep them in their marinade in a covered container in the fridge. Eat within about **2 days** (general guidance, I haven't found an official time for marinated eggs). A jammy yolk is not fully cooked: check current FSA advice on runny eggs, and cook the eggs for 10 minutes until solid for pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell.

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: soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame seeds and oil are sesame; eggs are an allergen; tofu is soy; some pickling ingredients contain mustard seed. Fried shallots are usually wheat-free but check shop-bought ones, which may be coated in flour.

LEVEL 1 · QUICK PICKLES

Quick pickled vegetables

15 minutes plus 30 minutes | 1 jar | making a pickling liquid and balancing sweet and sour

Sharp, crunchy pickles cut the richness of a noodle bowl. The same liquid pickles carrot, cucumber and red cabbage in under an hour. They keep in the fridge for a week.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

2	carrots, in thin matchsticks
½	cucumber, in thin slices
¼	red cabbage, finely shredded
200 ml	rice vinegar
200 ml	water
3 tbsp	sugar
1 tsp	salt
1	clean jar with a lid

1. Stir the vinegar, water, sugar and salt together (warm them for a minute to dissolve if needed) and cool.
2. Pack the carrot, cucumber and cabbage into jars and pour over the liquid until covered. Press them down.
3. Leave for **30 minutes** at room temperature, then chill. Taste after an hour. They are good for 1 week in the fridge.

KEEPING THE PICKLES

Quick pickles: these are fridge pickles, not canned ones. Use clean jars, keep the pickles covered in their liquid, store them in the fridge and eat within about **1 week** (general guidance). Don't try to can or store them at room temperature without proper preserving advice.

Knife safety: cut on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath), tuck your guiding fingertips

> back (the claw), and cut round vegetables like carrots on a flat face so they can't roll. Cooking Skills: Knife Skills 1 covers this.

LEVEL 2 · FRYING

Crispy shallots and garlic

20 minutes | 1 small jar | frying slowly in gentle oil until crisp and golden

Crisp, savoury, sweet shards to scatter over any bowl. The trick is to start in cool oil and watch carefully. Take them out before they look done.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	shallots, thinly sliced into rings
4	garlic cloves, thinly sliced
150 ml	vegetable oil
1 pinch	salt
1	kitchen paper and a heatproof bowl

1. Dry the shallots and garlic on kitchen paper. Put the shallots in a small pan with the oil and heat gently over a medium heat.
2. Fry for **8 to 12 minutes**, stirring, until they turn pale gold and the bubbling slows. Lift out with a slotted spoon onto kitchen paper at once.
3. Fry the garlic separately for 2 to 3 minutes, again taking it out when pale gold. Salt both and let them crisp as they cool.
4. Strain and cool the oil: use it for dressings. Store the crisps in a jar once completely cool and use within 3 or 4 days.

> **HOT OIL AND BURNING**
>
> **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.
>
> **Frying shallots and garlic:** start them in cold or lukewarm oil on a medium heat, never leave the pan, and take them out the moment they turn pale gold, because they keep darkening in the hot oil and turn bitter. Drain on kitchen paper. Strain and cool the oil before storing: it can be reused for dressings and keeps in the fridge for about a week.

LEVEL 3 · SLOW

Slow-cooked soy pork (or tofu) topping

1 hour 45 minutes | 6 portions of topping | braising a topping until tender and the sauce is glossy

Soft, sticky, sweet-salty pork to spoon over noodles or rice. It tastes better the next day. A tofu version takes much less time.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

500 g	pork belly or shoulder, in 3 cm cubes (or 400 g firm tofu, cubed and pan-fried)
3 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	dark soy sauce
2 tbsp	sugar
2	garlic cloves, sliced
3 cm	ginger, sliced
1	star anise
400 ml	water or stock
1 tbsp	rice vinegar

1. Brown the pork in a dry pan on a medium heat for 5 to 8 minutes, pouring off a little fat. Add the garlic and ginger for 1 minute.
2. Add the soy sauces, sugar, star anise and water, bring to a simmer, cover and cook gently for **1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes**, until the pork is very tender.
3. Uncover and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until the sauce is thick and glossy. Add the vinegar and taste.
4. For tofu, simmer the pan-fried cubes in the sauce for just 15 minutes. Cool and chill within 1 to 2 hours; reheat until steaming hot.

RAW PORK, HOT SAUCE AND KEEPING

Slow-cooked toppings: cool them within about 1 to 2 hours (shallow container), keep covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze them, and reheat until steaming hot, once only. Cook pork until tender and no pink, and the juices run clear.

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: soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame seeds and oil are sesame; eggs are an allergen; tofu is soy; some pickling ingredients contain mustard seed. Fried shallots are usually wheat-free but check shop-bought ones, which may be coated in flour.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Marinating time

4 hours or 12.

1. Marinate two eggs for 4 hours and two for 12 hours. Halve and taste.

Look for: The 4-hour egg is lightly seasoned with a pale rim; the 12-hour egg is darker, saltier and firmer. Both are good: pick your favourite.

EXPERIMENT

Pickle liquid

More or less sugar.

1. Pickle carrot in the liquid as written and in a liquid with half the sugar. Taste after an hour.

Look for: Less sugar makes a sharper, more sour pickle; more sugar makes a milder one. Choose the one that suits your noodles.

EXPERIMENT

Frying temperature

Cool start, hot start.

1. Fry one batch of shallots starting in cold oil and another dropped into hot oil.

Look for: The cold start gives even golden crisps. The hot start browns the outsides and leaves them soft inside, and they often burn. Always start gently.

EXPERIMENT

Topping amounts

Few or many.

1. Build a bowl with one topping and another with four. Taste each.

Look for: One topping tastes plain; four tastes busy. Three is usually the best balance of soft, sharp and crisp.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Marinated eggs				
Quick pickles				
Crispy shallots and garlic				
Slow-cooked soy pork or tofu				
Marinating time				
Pickle liquid				
Frying start				
Topping amounts				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Egg yolk overcooked	Timer missed or eggs not cooled	Use a timer and cool in cold water at once
Eggs hard to peel	Very fresh eggs, or not cooled	Use older eggs; peel under cold water
Pickles limp	Cut too thick or left too long	Slice thinly; eat within a week
Bitter fried shallots	Over-browned	Take out when pale gold; they keep darkening
Soggy crisps	Stored warm or damp	Cool completely on paper; store dry in a jar
Tough pork	Not cooked long enough	Keep simmering gently until it is tender

EGGS, HOT OIL, KEEPING AND ALLERGENS

Marinated eggs: use Lion-marked eggs, cook them for the set time, cool them in cold water and keep them in their marinade in a covered container in the fridge. Eat within about **2 days** (general guidance, I haven't found an official time for marinated eggs). A jammy yolk is not fully cooked: check current FSA advice on runny eggs, and cook the eggs for 10 minutes until solid for pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell.

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Quick pickles: these are fridge pickles, not canned ones. Use clean jars, keep the pickles covered in their liquid, store them in the fridge and eat within about **1 week** (general guidance). Don't try to can or store them at room temperature without proper preserving advice.

Slow-cooked toppings: cool them within about 1 to 2 hours (shallow container), keep covered in the fridge for up to **2 days** or freeze them, and reheat until steaming hot, once only. Cook pork until tender and no pink, and the juices run clear.

Allergens: soy sauce contains soy and wheat; sesame seeds and oil are sesame; eggs are an allergen; tofu is soy; some pickling ingredients contain mustard seed. Fried shallots are usually wheat-free but check shop-bought ones, which may be coated in flour.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can boil and marinate eggs for a set time.
- ☐ I can make quick pickles and keep them safely.
- ☐ I can fry shallots and garlic to pale gold.
- ☐ I can braise a topping until tender and cool it safely.
- ☐ I choose a soft, a sharp and a crisp topping for a bowl.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 8 is A World Noodle Table: planning a table of four bowls for guests.

Cooking Skills: Noodles 2

Chapter 8 · A World Noodle Table

SKILL GOAL

Plan a table of four noodle bowls, cook ahead safely and design a bowl of your own from what you have learned.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

You now know ramen, pho, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and South-East Asian noodle dishes, plus the toppings that finish them. The last chapter is about **putting it together**: a table of several bowls, a plan that makes weeknights easy, and a bowl of your own.

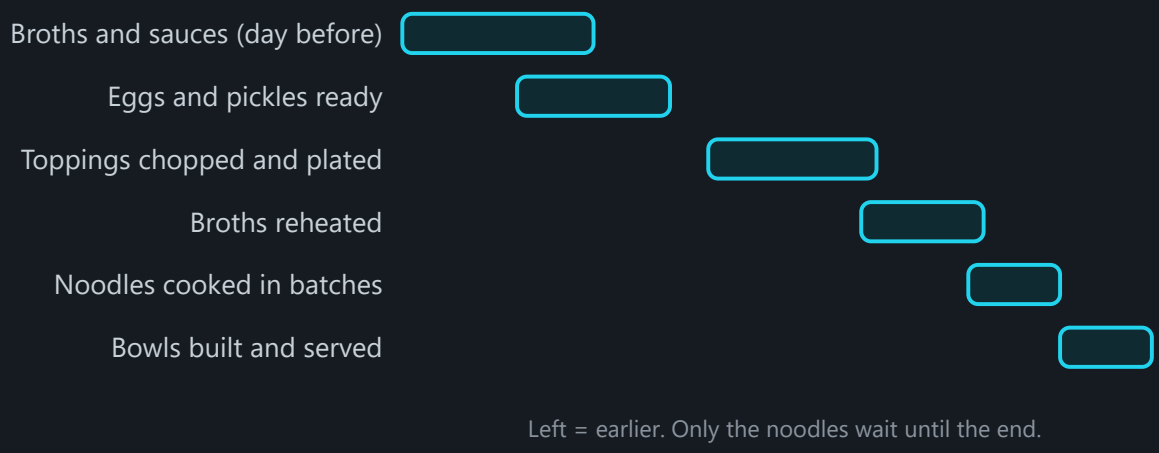


Figure 8. A running order for a four-bowl noodle table. Only the noodles are cooked at the last minute.

Planning a noodle table

- **Choose contrast:** one clear broth, one rich sauce, one cold dish and one stir-fry or soup with a different noodle.
- **Make the sauces and broths the day before.** They taste better, and the last hour is only noodles.

- **Cook the noodles last,** in batches, and serve small portions so guests can taste everything.
- **Label everything** for allergens and vegetarians.

Your skills table

REGION	SIGNATURE SKILL	CHAPTER	MY TOP TIP
Japan (ramen)	Tare, broth and aroma oil	Noodles 2, chapter 1	Measure the tare and taste
Vietnam	Charring, toasting and a clear broth	Noodles 2, chapter 2	Simmer gently; herbs on the side
Japan (udon, yakisoba)	Dashi, noodle to dish	Noodles 2, chapter 3	Season slightly stronger than you think
Korea	Balancing sweet, salty, spicy, nutty and tangy	Noodles 2, chapter 4	Fry pastes; taste the sauce first
China	Numbing and hot, fried sauces	Noodles 2, chapter 5	Build the sauce in the bowl
Thailand, Malaysia	Pastes, wok heat, balance	Noodles 2, chapter 6	Fry the paste; basil last
Toppings	Soft, sharp and crisp	Noodles 2, chapter 7	Make ahead; crisp last

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 broth				
My best sauce				
My best topping				
My best make-ahead dish				
My noodle table menu				
My fusion bowl				

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A four-bowl noodle table for guests

The day before and 1 hour 30 minutes on the day | 4 to 6 guests | planning and running a multi-dish table

Four bowls from four countries on one table: a ramen, a pho, a dan dan noodle dish and a cold spicy noodle. Each uses a skill from this course, and each is mostly made ahead. Everyone takes a little of each.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 batch	shoyu chicken ramen (Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 1), tare and broth made the day before
1 batch	quick chicken pho broth (Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 2)
1 batch	dan dan noodles sauce and pork (Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 5)
1 batch	bibim guksu sauce (Cooking Skills: Noodles 2, chapter 4), with cucumber and eggs
1 batch	toppings from chapter 7: marinated eggs, quick pickles and crispy shallots
600 g	noodles in four types, about 150 g per bowl
1 batch	herbs, limes, spring onions and chilli oil, to serve

1. **Two days before:** marinate the eggs and make the pickles (chapter 7). **The day before:** make the ramen tare and broth, the pho broth, the dan dan sauce and pork, and the bibim guksu sauce. Cool and refrigerate everything, covered.
2. **On the day:** chop the toppings and set them in labelled bowls. Fry the shallots (chapter 7) an hour or two before.
3. Reheat the two broths until steaming hot and keep them at a bare simmer. Reheat the dan dan pork until steaming hot.
4. Cook each noodle type in batches, drain and divide into small bowls. Rinse and drain the cold noodles.
5. Build each bowl at the table. Serve small portions so guests can try all four.

> FEEDING A CROWD
>
> **Serving a crowd:** keep hot broths steaming hot and cold toppings in the fridge until needed. Don't leave cooked noodles, eggs, pork or cold toppings out for more than about 2 hours (a

cautious rule of thumb). Clear leftovers into the fridge promptly, keep broth and noodles separate, and eat within a day or two (broth within 2 days).

Label for guests: put a small card by each bowl, 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 toppings well away and use clean spoons.

Making ahead: cool broths, sauces and toppings quickly (shallow containers, within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and reheat broths and meat until steaming hot, once only. Keep the noodles for the last minute: cooked noodles are best cooked fresh.

Raw meat: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes).

LEVEL 2 · PLAN

A make-ahead plan

30 minutes of planning, then cooking in batches

A freezer and fridge stocked for two or three nights

cooking once and eating well several times

Most of this course's sauces and broths keep. Cook a few at the weekend and the weeknight noodle bowl is just boiling noodles and warming a sauce.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	pen, paper and the chapter running orders
1	freezer containers and labels
1 batch	one broth or sauce to freeze (for example the ramen tare or the zhajiangmian sauce)
1	noodles in the cupboard for the night itself

1. List which of your favourite dishes can be made ahead: sauces (dan dan, zhajiangmian, gochujang), tare, broths, marinated eggs, pickles and slow-cooked toppings.
2. Cook two of them, cool quickly and portion into labelled containers with the date. Keep sauces and broths in the fridge for up to 2 days or freeze them.
3. On the night, reheat until steaming hot (once only), cook fresh noodles and add the toppings.
4. Note what worked and what you would change.

> **FREEZING AND REHEATING**
>
> Freeze broths and meat sauces in portions, label them with the date, thaw in the fridge overnight and reheat until steaming hot. Don't refreeze what has been thawed. Noodles are better cooked fresh.

LEVEL 3 · CREATE

Your fusion bowl and house recipes

1 hour | 1 to 2 portions | designing a bowl that combines what you have learned

Now design a bowl of your own. Take the broth or sauce from one country, the noodle from another and the toppings from a third. Write it down, make it and change one thing.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1	noodle: choose one from any chapter
1	broth or sauce: choose one
1	protein: choose one
3	a soft, a sharp and a crisp topping
1	a notebook and pen

1. **Choose:** a broth or sauce, a noodle, a protein, and a soft, a sharp and a crisp topping. Think about balance: salty, sweet, sour, hot and rich.
2. **Plan:** write the order of work and what can be made ahead.
3. **Cook and taste:** taste the broth or sauce before the noodles go in and adjust.
4. **Write it up:** the ingredients by weight, the steps and times, and what you would change. Make it again with one change.

> YOUR HOUSE RECIPES
>
> Write down the first version exactly as you made it, then the changes. After a few tries you have a recipe that is yours. Keep the recipes you cook most in one place.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed noodle table

Plan it, then run it.

1. Write a plan for a table of two or four bowls using the running order in this chapter. Note when each part is ready.

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

EXPERIMENT

Swap one broth

One change.

1. Make a noodle bowl with the same noodles and toppings twice, once with the ramen broth and tare and once with the pho broth.

Look for: A different broth makes a very different bowl from the same noodles. Write down which you preferred.

EXPERIMENT

Your own fusion bowl

Write it, make it, improve it.

1. Make your fusion bowl. Change one thing the second time (a noodle, an acid, a 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?
Four-bowl table				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Make-ahead plan				
Fusion bowl				
Timed noodle table				
Swapped broth				
Second version of my bowl				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Noodles gluey at the table	Cooked too early	Cook in batches just before serving; rinse cold noodles
Too much to do at once	No plan	Write a running order; do broths and sauces the day before
Broth cold	Poured too early	Keep it simmering; warm the bowls
A guest can't eat anything	Didn't ask	Ask beforehand; label bowls; keep a safe option
Everything tastes the same	Too many similar sauces	Choose contrast: clear, rich, cold, spicy
Leftovers unsafe	Left out too long	Clear into the fridge after about 2 hours; throw away what sat out all evening

PARTY SAFETY

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

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Raw meat: wash your hands, board and knife after handling raw meat, and cook chicken and pork until steaming hot with no pink and clear juices (70°C for 2 minutes).

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 and run a table of several noodle bowls.
- ☐ I make broths, sauces and toppings ahead and cook noodles last.
- ☐ I can freeze and reheat sauces and broths safely.
- ☐ I label dishes for allergies.
- ☐ I can design and write down my own bowl.

NEXT CHAPTER

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