

## □ Oodles and Oodles of Asian Noodles

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### Recipes:

Ants Climbing a Tree  
Bacon Noodle Salad  
Thai Khaeng Keo-want Gai Mee

(Korean Mixed Vegetables)  
(Green Curry with Chicken)

Asian noodle dishes are a staple in many Asian cuisines and are often served as a main course or a side dish. They can be made with a variety of noodles, including rice noodles, wheat noodles, and glass noodles. The most common types of Asian noodles are rice noodles, wheat noodles, and glass noodles. Rice noodles are made from rice flour and water, while wheat noodles are made from wheat flour and water. Glass noodles are made from mung bean starch and water. Asian noodles are often served with a variety of toppings, including vegetables, meat, and seafood. They can be served hot or cold, and are a popular choice for many people.



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### Rice Noodles

Also called rice sticks, rice vermicelli, *Banh Pho*, and Bun noodles. Made from a paste of rice and water, they are white in color, and come in a variety of widths and thickness, from about 1 centimeter to thread-like. These noodles are precooked so they only need to be soaked for 15 to 20 minutes to soften, and then are rinsed to remove the starch. They are used in soups, cold appetizers, salads, spring rolls, and appear in Vietnamese

*pho*

soups and

*Pad Thai*

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### Cellophane Noodles

Also called bean threads, glass threads, or transparent vermicelli. These are translucent, very thin thread-like noodles made from mung bean flour and water and become almost transparent when soaked before cooking. They have a unique slippery texture that, when stir-fried, picks up the flavors of the other ingredients. When deep-fried, they puff up, become crispy and add texture to dishes. They are commonly used in clear soups, stir-frys, and in dessert soups.

### Chinese Egg Noodles

Called *Dan Mien*, *Hokkein Mae*, and in Southeast Asia, *Ba-me*. These noodles are made from eggs and wheat flour and are the most similar to Italian and American noodles. They come in variety of sizes and are usually a pale light yellow but can also be dark orange in color, and are sold fresh or dried. These are the ones you find coiled up in bundles. To cook them, bring a pot of water to a boil add the noodles, turn off the heat and allow them to soak for 5 minutes to soften. They can then be added to dishes or stir-frys. These noodles are made from the same dough as used to make wontons and egg rolls.

### Ramen Noodles



These are a variation of Chinese egg noodles, but they differ in that they are very curly and long and are dried into a rectangular brick. These are the noodles that are packaged with flavor packets and sold as an "almost instant" soup. To cook, add the noodles to boiling water and boil for 3 minutes. They are used in soups, or drained and added to a wok for variety of stir-frys.

### Soba Noodles

These are a tan, thick, flat noodle that is made from combination of buckwheat and wheat flours. They are a substantial noodle with a slightly chewy texture, hearty flavor and are very nutritious. Served both cold with a dipping sauce or hot, and are also added to soups, stews, and stir-frys. Soba noodles need to be boiled but the cooking time varies with the thickness so check the package for the time. It's also important to stir the noodles when you add them to the water or they will clump together.

### Udon Noodles

Made from wheat flour and water, these are a wide noodle that can be either flat or round. They are thick and chewy and are usually eaten in soups and stews, but are also be added to braised dishes. These are the noodles that are used in *Chow Mein* and *Lo Mein*.

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## Recipes



### Ants Climbing a Tree

This classic Sichuan dish gets its unusual name from the bits of pork clinging to the noodles, not the insect. The pork resembles ants and the noodles, trees. Transparent bean threads, or cellophane noodles are the ones used in this recipe.

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1 4-ounce package cellophane noodles

-

1/4 cup shitake or other dried mushrooms

-

6 ounces ground pork

-

1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil, peanut preferred

-

1 teaspoon minced ginger

-

2 green onions, sliced including the green

-

4 teaspoons hot bean paste

-

2 teaspoons crushed red chile or substitute Asian chile paste

### *Marinade:*

-

1 tablespoon rice wine or dry sherry

-

1 tablespoon dark soy sauce

-

2 teaspoons cornstarch

### *Sauce:*

-

1/2 cup chicken broth

-

1 tablespoon soy sauce

-

1 tablespoon rice wine or dry sherry

-

2 teaspoons cornstarch

Place the noodles in a bowl, cover them with hot water and allow them to soak for 15 to 20 minutes to soften. Drain and cut them into pieces about 4-inches in length.

In another bowl, soak the mushrooms in hot water for 10 minutes or until soft. Drain and mince the mushrooms.

Combine all the ingredients for the marinade, add the pork and marinate at room temperature for 5 minutes.

Mix all the sauce ingredients in a separate bowl and set aside.

Heat a wok over high heat and when hot, add the oil. When the oil just begins to smoke, add the pork and stir-fry until the pork begins to brown. Add the ginger, green onion, and the mushrooms, and stir-fry until the pork is well browned. Add the bean paste and stir-fry for about 15 seconds or until it is well-combined with other ingredients.

Add the noodles, the sauce ingredients, and chile. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, cover and cook for 5 minutes until the sauce is thickened and the bean threads just begin to stick to the wok.

Mound the noodles on a large platter and serve.

Yield: 4 servings

Heat Scale: Medium

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### **Chap Chee (Korean Mixed Vegetables with Beef and Vermicelli Noodles)**

Whether you call it *Chap Chee*, *Chap Chae*, or *Jap Chae* (a combination of Japan and China),

this is a very popular dish that combines a variety of textures, colors, flavors, simple seasonings along with one of their staples, noodles. Koreans love beef and serve it more often than pork and chicken, and they never eat lamb or goat. Garlic, ginger, and sesame are common to most Korean beef dishes and this one is no exception. Traditionally, *Chap Chee* is spiced up with a bowl of *kimchi*. Available in Asian markets, it's a fiery hot condiment containing fermented vegetables such as cabbage and turnips. An acquired taste! The meat will be easier to thinly slice if put in the freezer for about 30 minutes and have all the ingredients assembled before stir-frying.

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3/4 pound flank or sirloin steak, trimmed and thinly sliced against the grain in strips 2-inches wide

-

1/4 cup dried wood ear mushrooms

-

4 ounces vermicelli noodles

-

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

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4 cloves garlic, sliced

-

1 tablespoon grated ginger

-

4 green onions, finely chopped including some of the greens

-

4 Thai chiles, stems removed, minced or substitute serrano or jalapeño chiles

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1 small carrot, julienne cut in 3-inch long pieces

-

1 small red bell pepper, julienne cut in 3-inch long pieces

-

1 1/2 cups chopped fresh spinach

-

1/2 cup straw mushrooms

-

1/2 cup bean sprouts



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Garnish: Chopped fresh cilantro

-

Toasted sesame seeds

### Kimchi

### *Sauce:*

-

1/4 cup soy sauce

-

2 tablespoons sugar

-

1 tablespoon sesame seed oil

-

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### *Marinade:*

-

1 tablespoon soy sauce

-

1 tablespoon sugar

-

1 green onion, chopped

-

1 teaspoon minced garlic

-

1 teaspoon sesame seed oil

Combine all the ingredients for the marinade in a bowl and add the beef. Toss to coat and marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Place the wood ears in a bowl and cover with warm water. Allow the mushrooms to steep for 30 minutes to soften. Drain the mushrooms and discard the water.

Cook the noodles according to the directions on the package, drain and keep warm.

Combine all the sauce ingredients in a bowl and stir to mix.

Heat a wok or heavy skillet over medium-high heat, add the oil and when hot, add the meat and quickly stir-fry until browned, about 2 minutes. Remove and keep warm.

Add the garlic and ginger to the wok and stir-fry until fragrant. Add the onions and chiles and stir-fry for an additional 2 minutes. Next add the carrots, bell peppers, and spinach and stir-fry for 2 more minutes.

Stir the sauce into the wok and add the noodles. Continue to stir-fry until the noodles absorb the sauce. Return the beef and cook until all ingredients are hot.

To serve, place the *Chap Chee* on a large serving platter, garnish with the cilantro and sesame seeds and serve with the *kimchi* on the side.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Heat Scale: Mild to Medium

(This recipe is from the new book by the Nancy and Dave DeWitt team, *The Spicy Food Lover's Bible*, to be published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang in Spring, 2005.)

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### Ramen Noodle Salad

Serve this salad as a first course or as an accompaniment to Asian dinners of all kinds. The

ingredients can be prepared ahead of time but don't assemble the salad until just before serving as the noodles tend to soak up all the dressing. This salad is quick and easy to prepare with numerous variations. Try adding cooked shrimp, cooked chicken, shredded cabbage, cooked green beans, or snow peas in place of some of the vegetables.

### *Dressing:*

-

3 tablespoons peanut oil

-

3 tablespoons peanut butter

-

3 tablespoons rice vinegar

-

2 tablespoons Asian garlic chile sauce or *sambal oelek*

-

1 tablespoon lime juice, fresh preferred

-

1 tablespoon dark soy sauce

-

2 teaspoons grated ginger

-

1 teaspoon sugar

-

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

-

1 clove garlic, minced

### *Salad:*

-

2 cups cooked ramen noodles

-

1/2 cup shredded carrots

-

1/4 cup green onions, chopped including the greens

-

1/4 cup bean sprouts

-

1/4 cup sliced cucumber

-

4 radishes, sliced

-

Garnish: Chopped peanuts and chopped fresh cilantro

In a bowl, combine all the ingredients for the dressing, mix well, and allow to sit at room temperature for an hour to blend the flavors.

Place the noodles in a large bowl or platter and top with the vegetables. Pour the sauce over the salad and gently toss.

Garnish the salad with the cilantro and nuts, and serve.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Heat Scale: Mild to Medium

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### **Mongolian Beef**

This Mandarin recipe also goes by the name of Beijing Beef. The crispy noodles add texture to this simple, stir-fry beef and green onions dish. Some recipes call for soaking the noodles before frying as the only way to get really crisp noodles, but putting wet noodles in hot oil will

cause the oil to spatter and may cause burns, so I don't recommend frying them this way. Just be sure they are crisp before removing and remember that they puff up quickly, so don't put too many in the wok at any one time.

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1 pound flank or round steak, thinly sliced in pieces 1 1/2 inches by 3/4 inches

-

2 cups vegetable oil for deep-frying

-

2 to 3-ounces rice vermicelli noodles

-

4 small dried red chiles, such as piquin or Thai

-

2 cloves garlic, minced

-

1 tablespoon hoisin sauce

-

1 tablespoon hot bean sauce

-

8 green onions, cut in 1 1/2-inch lengths

### *Marinade:*

-

2 tablespoons dark soy sauce

-

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

-

1 tablespoon rice wine or dry sherry

-

2 teaspoons cornstarch

-

1 teaspoon sesame oil

-

1/2 teaspoon sugar

Slice the beef across grain and at an angle into thin strips. Combine all the ingredients for the marinade in bowl and mix well. Add the beef and marinate, at room temperature for an hour, or in the refrigerator for up to 4 hours.

Heat a wok until hot, add the oil and heat to a temperature of 375 degrees F. Gently loosen the roll of noodles with your fingers and break into 3 portions. Carefully lower one of the portions of the noodles into the oil with a slotted spoon and press under the oil for 2 seconds until puffed and crisp. Immediately remove the noodles from wok and drain. Repeat with remaining noodles.



Pour off all but 1 to 2 tablespoons of the oil and reheat. Add the chiles and garlic and stir-fry for a minute. Add the beef and stir-fry until the meat is lightly browned.

Add the hoisin sauce, hot bean sauce, cornstarch and on-half cup water to the wok. Bring to a boil over medium heat and add the green onions. Simmer for a couple of minutes to thicken the sauce so it clings to the meat.

To serve, place the noodles on a platter and top with the meat.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Heat Scale: Medium

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### **Thai Khaeng Keo-want Gai Mee (Green Curry with Chicken and Noodles)**

This curry dish is adapted from a recipe by "The King of Curry" in his recommended book, *Pat Chapman's Noodle Book*.

In it he says that "green curry is probably Thailand's most popular dish, both inside and outside the country. Cooked correctly it is a delicate blend of fragrance and flavor, of subtle color laced together with creamy coconut milk. In fact the sauce is not and should not be green; it, and the chicken, is a buff-white color. It is the accompanying herbs -- basil and cilantro-- and, traditionally, pea aubergines, and huge numbers of tiny green Thai chiles that give the dish its greenness." Since pea aubergines (tiny eggplants) are somewhat bitter and difficult to find, they have been eliminated in this recipe.

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9 ounces dried or 1 pound fresh egg noodles

-

1 boneless and skinless chicken breast, sliced

-

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

-

2 to 3 cloves garlic, chopped

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1 2-inch piece galangal or ginger, chopped

-

1 to 3 teaspoons Thai green curry paste

-

1 14-ounce can coconut milk

-

2 or 3 stalks lemon grass

-

2 to 3 Kaffir lime leaves, shredded, omit if unavailable

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5 to 6 green Thai chiles, stems and seeds removed, chopped

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1 to 2 teaspoon fish sauce (*nam pla*)

-

2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

-

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Heat a large pot of water to a boil, add the noodles and cook until "al dente." Drain the noodles and keep warm.

Trim the stalks of lemon grass to about 3-inches in length. Trim away any hard portions, discard the outer leaves, and coarsely chop.

Heat a wok, add the oil and when hot, add the garlic, ginger, and green curry paste, and stir-fry for about one minute. Add the coconut milk, lemon grass, lime leaves, and simmer for 5 minutes stirring occasionally to allow the milk until thickened. It may look as though it is curdling, but it cannot do this so don't worry.

Add the chicken and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Add the chiles, fish sauce, basil and cilantro and continue to cook for 5 more minutes. Cut a piece of chicken to check to see that it's done.

Immediately add the noodles, stir, and simmer until the noodles are hot.

Yield: 4 servings

Heat Scale: Hot

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