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## Korean noodle dish Japchae from the wok

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Korean noodle dish Japchae Photos Susie Iventosch

We were in the Chicago area for a friends' reunion a few weeks ago, and the mom of one of our friend's was born and raised in South Korea. She brought a dish to the gathering, and it was called Japchae, which to be honest, I'd never heard of even though I've actually been to Seoul and had a few meals there. It could be that the menu listed it under a different name, but whatever the case, her dish was delicious, made from "glass" noodles, which are noodles made from sweet potato starch, tossed in a delicious dressing of soy, sesame oil, sugar, rice vinegar, garlic, and sesame seeds, and tossed again with a rainbow of sautéed veggies.

☐ Soon after I had tasted her Japchae, and helped myself to seconds, I realized I'd be making this dish soon because it was so delicious and beautiful. I couldn't find the exact kind of noodles made with sweet potato starch, so I substituted rice noodles instead, and they made a great substitute. The tricky thing about the rice noodles is that they can be very sticky, and you really

want to cook them until they are actually a bit sticky before tossing them in the dressing. Just work the noodles into the dressing with tongs and you'll find that the stickiness is no longer such an issue.

☐ If you have a wok, sautéing of all of the veggies would be a bit easier, but I simply sautéed them, one veggie at a time, in a large saute pan and it worked out very well. While her recipe called for carrots, mushrooms, onions, and bell peppers, I added some eggplant, which was very good in this dish. Broccoli would also be a great addition.

☐ The bottom line is that you can use whatever veggies you like, and she even added very thinly sliced beef to her Japchae. Pork is often an ingredient, and sometimes you find recipes that call for the addition of scrambled eggs, much like fried rice does.

☐ The overall taste of fresh veggies with rice noodles, soy-sesame dressing, and sesame seeds is overwhelmingly satisfying. I hope you love it as much as I do!

### ☐ Ingredients

- ☐ 3 cups fresh spinach leaves
- ☐ 1 yellow onion, cut into thin, 2-3 inch strips
- ☐ 4 green onions, cut into 2-3 inch strips
- ☐ 1 small eggplant, cut into rounds and sweated, then cut into 2-3 inch strips (leave skin on)
- ☐ 1 red bell pepper, seeds and stem removed and cut into very thin 2-3 inch strips
- ☐ 1 yellow or orange bell pepper, seeds and stem removed and cut into very thin 2-3 inch strips
- ☐ 10 cremini mushrooms, thinly sliced
- ☐ 1 cup shredded carrots, or cut into very thin 2-3 inch matchstick strips
- ☐ 2 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds (toast in the oven for about 5 minutes at 250 F. until golden brown)
- ☐ 7 oz. rice noodles (our friend used sweet potato starch noodles, but I used rice noodles)
- ☐ 1/4 cup oil for sautéing noodles and veggies
- ☐ \*Optional - thinly sliced beef or pork

### ☐ DRESSING

- ☐ 5 tbs. soy sauce
- ☐ 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- ☐ 1 tbsp. rice vinegar
- ☐ 2 tbsp. sesame oil
- ☐ 1 garlic clove, minced
- ☐ 1 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds
- ☐ 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- ☐ Mix all well in a container with a tight-fitting lid and shake well. Refrigerate until ready to use.

### ☐ DIRECTIONS

#### ☐ Noodles

☐ Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the noodles and cook for about 8 minutes, or until the noodles are translucent and tender. Drain in a colander and rinse with cold water. Drain any remaining water. Transfer noodles to a large salad bowl and toss with 1/4 cup of the prepared dressing. Set aside. The noodles will be on the chewy side.

☐ Meanwhile, heat a little bit of oil in a skillet or wok and add the drained pasta. Cook the pasta over medium until translucent and sticky. Transfer back to the bowl.

☐ Add 1 tbsp. of oil to the pan and cook the carrots over medium-high heat, stirring often, for about one minute, or until the carrots are al dente. Push the carrots to the back of the pan. Add the yellow and green onion and continue to cook over medium heat until onions are becoming translucent. You don't want to overcook the veggies, so err on the underdone side.

☐ Continue the process with bell peppers, eggplant, mushrooms and remove each veggie from the pan

or wok once cooked to al dente. Cook the spinach last, and only for about one minute to allow it to be tender, but not stringy or mushy.

□ If adding beef or pork, add it to the pan with a little more oil after removing the spinach and cook to desired doneness. Remove from pan and add to the bowl with the noodles.

□ Add all of the cooked veggies to the noodles (and meat) in the bowl and toss with the remaining dressing. Serve with extra toasted sesame seeds scattered on top. This dish can be served cold, warm, or at room temperature. Store any leftovers in the refrigerator. Reheat the leftovers in the microwave to let the noodles become a bit chewy again.



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[back](#)

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