



Chinese Takeout Cucumber Dan Dan Noodles

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 15 / **Cook Time** 15 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

grate: to reduce food, like a carrot, to very small shreds or pieces of the same size by rubbing it on a tool with an outside surface that has holes with cutting edges (a grater).

toss: to lightly lift and drop food items together or coat food items with flour, or a sauce or dressing, as in a salad.

whisk: to beat or stir ingredients vigorously with a fork or whisk to mix, blend, or incorporate air.

taste: to put a bit of food or drink in your mouth to determine whether more of an ingredient is needed to improve the flavor.

scoop: to pick up an amount of food with a utensil to move it to a dish, pan, or container; utensils that can be used to scoop are spoons, dishers (small scoops used for cookie dough or melon balls), ice cream scoops, or large transfer scoops for bulk foods.

drain: to pour excess liquid from food into a container if reserving the liquid, or into the sink or trash if not saving it.

Equipment

- Large pot
- Liquid measuring cup
- Dry measuring cups
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Small metal spoon

- Colander or strainer
- Grater
- Measuring spoons
- Large mixing bowl
- Whisk
- Medium saucepan
- Wooden spoon

Ingredients

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- 3 C egg noodles or long pasta, like linguine **** (for EGG/CELIAC/GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 3 C Asian rice noodles)****
- 1 lb cucumbers
- 1/2 inch fresh ginger root for 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1 to 2 green onions
- 1/2 C tahini **** (for SESAME ALLERGY sub 1/2 C sunflower seed butter)****
- 2 T granulated sugar, brown sugar, honey, or agave nectar
- 3 T soy sauce + more to taste **** (CELIAC/GLUTEN/SOY ALLERGY sub coconut aminos)****
- 1 1/2 T rice vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- water, up to 1/4 C, for thinning sauce if needed
- salt, to taste
- hot sauce or hot pepper flakes, optional

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Egg/Celiac/Gluten/Wheat: For 3 C egg noodles, substitute 3 C Asian rice noodles.

Sesame: For 1/2 C tahini, substitute 1/2 C sunflower seed butter.

Celiac/Gluten/Wheat/Soy: For 3 T soy sauce, substitute 3 T coconut aminos.

Instructions

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cook + slice + scoop + drain

Cook **3 cups of egg noodles** according to package directions. While the noodles cook, slice **1 pound of cucumbers** in half lengthwise and, using a spoon, scoop out and discard the seeds. Drain the noodles and set them aside.

grate + chop

Grate the cucumbers and **1/2 inch ginger root**. Then, chop **1 to 2 green onions** and set them aside.

measure + whisk

In a large bowl, measure and whisk together **1/2 cup tahini**, **2 tablespoons sugar**, **3 tablespoons soy sauce**, **1 1/2 tablespoons rice vinegar**, **1/2 teaspoon black pepper**, and **1 teaspoon grated ginger**. Count to 5 in Chinese while whisking: 1 yī (eee), 2 èr (arr), 3 sān (sahn), 4 sì (ssuh), 5 wǔ (woo).

heat + stir + toss

Pour the mixture into a saucepan and heat it until it bubbles, about 3 minutes. If needed, thin the sauce with hot water so that it is about the consistency of heavy cream; you may need up to a **1/4 cup of water**. Stir the **grated cucumbers** into the sauce, then toss the **cooked noodles** and **chopped green onions** with the sauce and grated cucumbers in the saucepan.

taste + add

Taste and add **salt** or **hot sauce** if desired. "Chī hǎo hē hǎo" (Chuh how huh how) or "Enjoy your meal" in Chinese!

Featured Ingredient: Cucumber!

Hi! I'm Cucumber!

"I'm as cool as a cucumber. Actually, I am a cucumber! I have a thick, dark green peel; I am longer than I am wide; and I am a fruit that's often used as a veggie! There are three types of cucumbers: slicing, pickling, and burpless. The slicing and burpless varieties, with or without their peels, are tasty and refreshing sliced, chopped, or minced in salads, sandwiches, salsa, sauces, appetizers, and smoothies or other drinks. The pickling cucumber eventually becomes a pickle (after its pickling spa treatment)!"

History & Etymology

Cucumbers are one of the oldest known cultivated vegetables. They have been grown for at least 3,000 years and are believed to have originated in India.

The early Greeks or Romans may have introduced cucumbers to Europe. Records indicate that the French cultivated them in the 9th century and the English in the 14th century. Then Spanish explorers brought cucumbers to the Americas in the 16th century.

Pickled cucumbers, or pickles, may have been produced first by workers building the Great Wall of China or by people in Mesopotamia's Tigris Valley.

A 1630 book called "New England's Plantation" by Francis Higginson, describing plants grown in a garden on Conant's Island in Boston Harbor, mentions "cowcumbers." The cucumber may have been dubbed cowcumber due to thinking at that time that uncooked vegetables were fit only for cows.

The word "cucumber" comes from late Middle English, from the Old French "cocombre," from the Latin "cucumis."

Anatomy

The cucumber is a creeping vine plant that is part of the Cucurbitaceae or gourd family. Other members are melon, squash, pumpkin, and watermelon. Cucumbers grow on a vine, often in sandy soil. Sandy soil warms faster in the spring, giving cucumbers a more favorable growing environment.

Cucumber length varies. Slicers are 6 to 8 inches, burpless 8 to 10 inches, and picklers are 3 to 5 inches long.

Cucumbers have a mild melon flavor. Slicing cucumbers will have seeds in their flesh, preferably small, soft seeds. Burpless cucumbers are slightly sweeter with a more tender skin and are easier to digest. They may also have no or very few seeds.

"Cool as a cucumber" isn't just a catchy phrase. A cucumber's inner temperature can be 10 to 20 degrees cooler than the outside air. This is because it consists mainly of water, which also applies to watermelons, and it takes more energy to heat the water inside the cucumber than the air around it. No wonder these are such summertime favorites! However, we don't say "as cool as a watermelon," so how did this expression become part of our vocabulary? It may have come from a poem in John Gay's *Poems, New Song on New Similes* from 1732.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

Cucumbers are ready to be harvested 50 to 70 days after planting. They are ripe when they are firm and bright or dark green. Slicing cucumbers will be six to eight inches long. Avoid leaving them on the vine too long, or their taste may become bitter and their rind tougher.

At the store, look for firm cucumbers without blemishes, wrinkles, or soft spots. Organic cucumbers are the best choice to avoid pesticide residue, if available. In addition, washing them reduces the amount of residue and pathogens.

If you don't eat your fresh, uncut cucumbers immediately, store them in your refrigerator crisper drawer in a plastic bag for up to three days if unwaxed and up to a week if waxed.

You can eat slicing and burpless cucumbers by themselves, slice or chop them into salads, or blend them

into sauces and smoothies.

Pickling cucumbers are pickled whole or sliced in brine, sugar, vinegar, and spices. There are several kinds of pickles, such as sweet, bread-and-butter, gherkin, and kosher dill.

Nutrition

Cucumbers are 96 percent water, have very little fat, and are low in calories.

Cucumbers contain small amounts of the vitamins you need every day and 16 percent of the daily value of vitamin K, which helps with blood clotting.