

Takeout-Style Sesame Noodles

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Serves: 4

Noodles dressed in sesame are popular in many parts of China, but this particular style, made with peanut butter and served cold, became a Chinese American staple in the United States in the 1970s. The family of Shorty Tang — an ambitious restaurateur who emigrated from Sichuan to Taipei to New York — firmly believes that he invented the dish and still serve it at Hwa Yuan, the restaurant he opened in 1967 in Manhattan's Chinatown. They have never divulged the exact recipe; this is our own lush but refreshing version.



Photograph Henri T. de Hahn

PS: As recipe is for 4, I favor reducing the pasta but keeping intact the sauce so that I can use it later if refrigerated.

- 1 pound noodles, frozen or (preferably) fresh
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil, plus a splash
- 3 ½ tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Chinese rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Chinese sesame paste
- 1 tablespoon smooth peanut butter (3-4 tablespoons if not using Chinese sesame paste)
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon finely grated ginger
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons chile-garlic paste, chile crisp or chile oil, or to taste
- Half a cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut into 1/8-inch by 1/8-inch by 2-inch sticks
- ¼ cup chopped roasted peanuts

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add noodles and cook until barely tender, about 5 minutes. They should retain a hint of chewiness. Drain, rinse with cold water, drain again and toss with a splash of sesame oil.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the remaining 2 tablespoons sesame oil, the soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame paste, peanut butter, sugar, ginger, garlic and chili-garlic paste.
3. Pour the sauce over the noodles and toss. Transfer to a serving bowl, and garnish with cucumber and peanuts.

The Chinese sesame paste called for here is made of toasted sesame seeds; it is not the same as tahini, the Middle Eastern paste made of plain, untoasted sesame. But you could use tahini in a pinch. You need only add a little toasted sesame oil to compensate for flavor, and perhaps some peanut butter to keep the sauce emulsified.