

Cucumber Raita

Center for Ecoliteracy -
Cooking with California Food

Flavor Profile: Asian
8 Servings



These light brown, nutty-flavored, slightly chewy Japanese soba noodles are made from buckwheat flour. They may be served hot or chilled, used in soups and stir-fry.

Ingredients:

14 ounces dried soba noodles – Whole-wheat spaghetti can be substituted for soba noodles.
4 tablespoons sesame oil
3–4 tablespoons vegetable oil
3 Japanese eggplants, unpeeled and cut into 3/4-inch cubes or rounds (about 2 cups)
1/2 pound extra-firm tofu, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
1/4 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup almond butter
1 teaspoon lemon juice or rice vinegar
1 garlic clove, minced
1/4 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
Dash of cayenne pepper, hot pepper, sesame oil, or chili oil
2 or more tablespoons water
8–10 leaves fresh Thai or other basil, thinly sliced

Directions:

In a large pot of boiling water, cook the noodles until soft, yet firm and not soggy, 4–5 minutes, or as instructed on the package. Drain the noodles in a colander, then rinse well under cold water, shaking back and forth to remove the starch. Drain them again and put in a serving bowl. Pour the sesame oil over them and toss to coat well. Set aside.

Heat the vegetable oil in a medium frying pan until hot, and add the eggplant, stirring. Reduce the heat and cook until lightly golden, about 3–4 minutes. Add the tofu and stir until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Set aside to cool.

In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce and the almond butter, mixing well. Add the lemon juice, garlic, ginger, cayenne pepper, and 2 tablespoons of water, stirring well.

Pour the sauce over noodles and mix carefully so that all of the soba noodles are coated. Place a serving of noodles in a bowl, top with eggplant/tofu mixture, and garnish with chiffonade of Thai basil.

Serve cold or at room temperature.

Suggestion: Add an English cucumber, cut into strips, to introduce a crunchy texture and cool flavor. Replace soba noodles with one 16-ounce package of oriental-style rice noodle sticks (banh pho my-tho), cooking very quickly in hot water for 2 minutes.