

Sesame Noodles with Sweet Peppers and Cucumbers - Cook's Illustrated

We prefer the flavor and texture of chunky peanut butter in the sauce; in particular, we like conventional chunky peanut butter because it tends to be sweeter than natural or old-fashioned versions.

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 1 medium red bell pepper
- 1 medium cucumber
- 1/4 cup sesame seeds
- 1/4 cup chunky peanut butter
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
- 5 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh squeezed lemon juice [*my addition*]
- 1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce (such as Tabasco)
- My addition: Squirts of Sri Racha and Thai Hot Spicy Chili Sauce and dash of hot chili oil*
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar lightly packed
- water, hot
- 1 tablespoon table salt
- 1 pound fresh Asian noodles or 12 ounces dried spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil (or 1 Tbs toasted + 1 Tbs "regular")
- 4 scallions, sliced thin on diagonal
- 1 medium carrot, grated (using the rapid or "wonder shredder" with the largest holes)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro leaves

My addition for garnish:

- 1 lime cut into wedges - to squeeze on top,*
- Thinly sliced green chili*
- Sri Racha sauce for those who want it*

1. Core, seed, and cut into 1/4-inch slices 1 medium red bell pepper; peel, halve lengthwise, seed, and cut crosswise into 1/8-inch slices 1 medium cucumber. Toast sesame seeds in medium skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until golden and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Reserve 1 tablespoon sesame seeds in small bowl. In blender or food processor, puree remaining 3 tablespoons sesame seeds, peanut butter, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, vinegar + lemon, hot sauce, and sugar until smooth, about 30 seconds. With machine running, add hot water 1 tablespoon at time until sauce has consistency of heavy cream, about 5 tablespoons; set blender jar or workbowl aside.

2. Bring 6 quarts water to boil in stockpot over high heat. Add salt and noodles to boiling water; boil noodles until tender, about 4 minutes for fresh and 10 minutes for dried. Drain, then rinse with cold running tap water until cool to touch; drain again. In large bowl, toss noodles with sesame oil until evenly coated. Add bell pepper, cucumber, scallions, carrot, and sauce; toss to combine. Divide among individual bowls, sprinkle each bowl with portion of reserved sesame seeds and chopped fresh cilantro and green chili, and serve.