

# Ramen Noodles

## Ramen Noodles

Like for most Americans, the fall season comes with its own sights, sounds, and smells. Fall is certainly more than just Starbucks PSL! It comes with its own moods and often seems as much a melancholy old man or mercurial crone as it does a gentle, slow bridge from summer to winter. While cinnamon and nutmeg are certainly part of fall's palette; my thoughts often cross the wide Pacific as the air chills, and the damp loaminess settles into the environs as the cold touches our bones.

Fall is most often when I made my trips, especially in my youth, to Japan. And with many friends still there, and many memories nudging; I confess to the distraction that is the multitasking of the day. A so singular interference from the diversionary errands in front of us that we neglect the important uni-tasking of our lives-Living and weaving the relationships around us. Like the maple and oak; the reminder stands tall and quietly, a temperate calendar of days gone by. A slow movie of our lives as the leaves explode into fall; echoing the brilliance of our story and heralding its *dénouement* as they drift, seeming aimlessly, to the forest floor.



## Chashu Ramen Bowl

It was with this nostalgia for a bite of the past that I was determined to re-create a meal that to me is reminiscent of those youthful adventures; when the icy winds did not reach so deeply and possibility seemed as endless as the coming winter's night. A comfort in fall's dimness; a hot, steaming bowl of real ramen....



### ***Ramen Noodles***

Most dough recipes can equally be worked by hand, in traditional fashion, or with modern time and labor-saving appliances. However, for ramen noodles, I highly suggest a stand mixer with a dough hook and pasta roller attachment. The dough is challenging to work by hand and because it contains

only four ingredients; the success lies completely in the execution of technique.

### ***Ingredients***

- 3 cups AP flour (organic preferred)
- 1 cup durum semolina flour (organic preferred)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sodium carbonate\*
- 1 cup warm water plus approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup additional

\*To make sodium carbonate, (a strong alkali and the magic ingredient that gives ramen noodles their unique texture): heat baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in an oven at 275 degrees F for about an hour.

Combine all the dry ingredients together in a stand mixer equipped with a dough hook. Add 1 cup of warm water and mix. The dough will initially appear too dry (it is), but keep working it as you would a pasta dough.



Once the dough releases from the sides, add remaining water slowly

Add the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup, 1 tablespoon at a time until the dough releases from the sides of the mixing bowl.

Now add the remaining water (you may need more or less

depending on the humidity, flour, etc.), 1 teaspoon at a time until the dough just comes together as a solid ball. Make sure to allow adequate kneading between additions.

The dough will be quite dense. Wrap in cling and refrigerate for at least an hour, preferably overnight.



Allow the dough, which will be quite stiff, to relax, preferably overnight

When you are ready to make the noodles, allow the dough to come up to room temperature. Equip the stand mixer with a pasta roller and cutter; alternatively you can roll the dough by hand. Divide the dough ball into eight equal pieces. Using the first setting on the roller, run the first dough piece through several times; the roller acts like additional kneading, so rotate the pieces 90 degrees between some of the passes. After the dough is smooth and flexible, four to five passes, increase the setting and pass the dough through once. I like a final setting of 5 on my device, about 1/8 of an inch thick for the noodles, but you may make them as thick or thin as you desire. Repeat for the remaining pieces of dough, laying the sheets on a heavily floured surface.



Dough now smooth and pliable after several passes through the rollers

Once the noodle sheets have been rolled out, change out for the pasta cutter attachment you prefer. Run the sheets through and flour the cut noodles to prevent sticking.



Cutting the ramen noodles

To prepare, cook the noodles (this method gives eight servings) by immersing them in the boiling serving liquid for a few minutes.



Ramen noodles ready  
for cooking

Place the noodles in a bowl layered with fresh vegetables, dried seaweed (*nori*) if desired and any meat (such as pork or chicken) you desire. A soft-boiled egg can also accompany the ramen bowl. Pour the cooking liquid into the bowl and enjoy!



Miso Chashu Ramen



## Shoyu Ramen

Beyond the noodles, the other great secret to a fantastic ramen bowl is the stock. And for Japanese cuisine that starts with dashi...

### *Dashi*

- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces *katsuobushi*; dried, smoked bonito flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce *kombu* (dried seaweed)
- 8 cups distilled water

Place the *kombu* in the cold water and heat to about 170 degrees F.



The water will start to simmer, but do not let it boil. Remove from heat, remove kombu and add *katsuobushi*. Steep the fish flakes for three minutes.



Katsuobushi steeping

Strain through a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth. Do not press hard to drain the last of the liquid from the flakes (a gentle press with the spoon suffices) as this will make the *dashi* bitter.



Strain the mixture

To make the final cooking liquid (*shoyu* ramen style) I add  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup soy sauce,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup mirin, to 1 quart homemade dashi stock.