Main dishes / China

Cold Sesame Noodles

Wheat noodles, cooked and cooled, tossed in a sauce of tahini and Chinese sesame paste, soy, black vinegar, chili oil, and a whisper of sugar — nutty, saline, sour, and hot all at once, a sauce so good you want to drink it. Cucumber julienne and scallion add crunch and green brightness against the yielding, slippery noodles.

Time 20 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 300 g Fresh or dried Chinese wheat noodles (medium thickness)
- ☐ 60 g Chinese sesame paste (zhima jiang) or tahini
- ☐ 30 g Light soy sauce
- ☐ 20 g Chinkiang black rice vinegar
- ☐ 20 g Chili oil (with sediment)
- ☐ 10 g Sugar
- ☐ 8 g Garlic cloves, finely grated
- ☐ 15 g Toasted sesame oil
- ☐ 30 g Hot water (to thin sauce)
- ☐ 100 g Cucumber, julienned into thin matchsticks
- ☐ 30 g Scallion, thinly sliced

Let's make it.

01 Bring a large pot of unsalted water to a rolling boil. Add the noodles and cook according to the package — typically 3 to 5 minutes for dried, 1 to 2 minutes for fresh. You want them tender but with a very slight resistance — not mushy, as they will continue to soften in the sauce. Drain immediately and rinse thoroughly under cold running water until completely cold. This stops the cooking and removes excess starch that would make them gummy. Toss with a teaspoon of sesame oil to prevent sticking.

02 In a bowl, combine the sesame paste, soy sauce, black vinegar, chili oil, sugar, grated garlic, and sesame oil. The sesame paste may seize into a stiff paste when soy is first added — this is normal. Whisk vigorously, then add the hot water a tablespoon at a time, whisking between additions, until the sauce is smooth, creamy, and pourable but still thick enough to coat a spoon. Taste and adjust: it should be intensely savoury, nutty, with a vinegar bite and noticeable heat.

03 Pour the sesame sauce over the cold noodles and toss firmly with tongs or two forks, lifting and folding until every strand is uniformly coated. The sauce will seem too thick initially — keep tossing for a full minute as it loosens from the noodle starch. Pile into bowls and top with the cucumber julienne and scallion. The cucumber should sit on top, not mixed in, so it stays crisp. Drizzle with extra chili oil if desired. Serve at room temperature — do not refrigerate before serving.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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