Sides / South Korea

Japchae (Korean Glass Noodles)

Chewy, translucent sweet potato glass noodles stir-fried with rainbow-julienned vegetables — each component cooked separately then brought together in a soy-sesame-sugar sauce — Korea's festive noodle dish, born for celebrations and potlucks, beautiful as a jewelled tapestry.

Time 45 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 200 g Dangmyeon (sweet potato glass noodles)
- ☐ 120 g Carrots, julienned into fine matchsticks
- ☐ 100 g Shiitake mushrooms, stems removed and sliced
- ☐ 10 g Garlic cloves, minced
- ☐ 30 ml Toasted sesame oil
- ☐ 30 ml Vegetable oil (for stir-frying)
- ☐ 10 g Toasted sesame seeds
- ☐ 150 g Fresh spinach, briefly blanched and squeezed
- ☐ 120 g Red bell pepper, julienned
- ☐ 100 g Onion, thinly sliced
- ☐ 45 ml Soy sauce (ganjang)
- ☐ 15 g Sugar (white)
- ☐ 5 g Fine sea salt
- ☐ 1 egg Egg, cooked as a thin omelette and julienned (optional)

Let's make it.

01 Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the dangmyeon and cook for 6–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the noodles are fully tender — they should have completely transformed from opaque white to a clear, glassy translucence, with a satisfying chewy resistance when bitten. They should not be gummy or soft-centered. Drain immediately and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking. Toss with a teaspoon of sesame oil to prevent clumping. Using scissors, cut the noodles into roughly 15cm lengths — dangmyeon are very long and unwieldy otherwise. Set aside.

02 The key to japchae's beauty is cooking each vegetable component separately so they retain individual color, texture and flavor. Heat a large wok or skillet over high heat. Working one ingredient at a time, add a thin film of oil and stir-fry each vegetable briefly: shiitake mushrooms, 3 minutes until golden and slightly reduced; onion with garlic, 3 minutes until translucent and softened; carrots, 2 minutes, still with some bite; red bell pepper, 1–2 minutes, still bright red; spinach (blanched, squeezed), 30 seconds just to warm through. Season each component lightly with salt as you go. Let each batch cool slightly on separate sections of a plate or tray — keeping them separate means the colors stay vivid when you bring everything together.

03 In the largest bowl you own, or back in the wok over low heat, combine the cooked noodles and all the stir-fried vegetables. In a small bowl, whisk together the remaining soy sauce, sesame oil and sugar until the sugar dissolves. Pour this seasoning sauce over everything and toss gently but thoroughly with tongs or two forks, lifting and folding the noodles to distribute the sauce and vegetables evenly. The soy-sesame-sweet sauce should coat every noodle strand and cling to the vegetables. Taste and adjust: more soy if it needs saltiness, more sesame oil for nuttiness, more sugar to balance. The flavour should be beautifully balanced — savory, nutty, slightly sweet, deeply umami.

04 Transfer the japchae to a large serving platter. Scatter the toasted sesame seeds generously over the top. If using the egg garnish, cut the thin omelette into fine julienne strips and arrange them over the top in a loose pile — they add a gentle richness and a striking golden colour against the dark noodles. Japchae is traditionally served at room temperature, which makes it ideal for parties and communal meals — it can be made several hours ahead and improves as the sauce continues to marinate the noodles. If serving warm, a brief toss in a hot wok for 2 minutes will revive it.

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