

Korean noodle dish Japchae from the wok

By Susie Iventosch



Korean noodle dish Japchae Photos Susie Iventosch

We were in the Chicago area for a friends' reunion a few weeks ago, and the mom of one of our friend's was born and raised in South Korea. She brought a dish to the gathering, and it was called Japchae, which to be honest, I'd never heard of even though I've

actually been to Seoul and had a few meals there. It could be that the menu listed it under a different name, but whatever the case, her dish was delicious, made from "glass" noodles, which are noodles made from sweet potato starch, tossed in a delicious

dressing of soy, sesame oil, sugar, rice vinegar, garlic, and sesame seeds, and tossed again with a rainbow of sautéed veggies.

Soon after I had tasted her Japchae, and helped myself to seconds, I realized I'd be making this dish soon because it was so delicious and beautiful. I couldn't find the exact kind of noodles made with sweet potato starch, so I substituted rice noodles instead, and they made a great substitute. The tricky thing about the rice noodles is that they can be very sticky, and you really want to cook them until they are actually a bit sticky before tossing them in the dressing. Just work the noodles into the dressing with tongs and you'll find that the sticki-

ness is no longer such an issue.

If you have a wok, sautéing of all of the veggies would be a bit easier, but I simply sautéed them, one veggie at a time, in a large saute pan and it worked out very well. While her recipe called for carrots, mushrooms, onions, and bell peppers, I added some eggplant, which was very good in this dish. Broccoli would also be a great addition.

The bottom line is that you can use whatever veggies you like, and she even added very thinly sliced beef to her Japchae. Pork is often an ingredient, and sometimes you find recipes

that call for the addition of scrambled eggs, much like fried rice does.

The overall taste of fresh veggies with rice

noodles, soy-sesame dressing, and sesame seeds is overwhelmingly satisfying. I hope you love it as much as I do!

Ingredients

- 3 cups fresh spinach leaves
- 1 yellow onion, cut into thin, 2-3 inch strips
- 4 green onions, cut into 2-3 inch strips
- 1 small eggplant, cut into rounds and sweated, then cut into 2-3 inch strips (leave skin on)
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds and stem removed and cut into very thin 2-3 inch strips
- 1 yellow or orange bell pepper, seeds and stem removed and cut into very thin 2-3 inch strips
- 10 cremini mushrooms, thinly sliced
- 1 cup shredded carrots, or cut into very thin 2-3 inch matchstick strips
- 2 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds (toast in the oven for about 5 minutes at 250 F. until golden brown)
- 7 oz. rice noodles (our friend used sweet potato starch noodles, but I used rice noodles)
- 1/4 cup oil for sautéing noodles and veggies
- *Optional - thinly sliced beef or pork

DRESSING

- 5 tbs. soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp. sesame oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper

Mix all well in a container with a tight-fitting lid and shake well. Refrigerate until ready to use.

DIRECTIONS

Noodles

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the noodles and cook for about 8 minutes, or until the noodles are translucent and tender. Drain in a colander and rinse with cold water. Drain any remaining water. Transfer noodles to a large salad bowl and toss with 1/4 cup of the prepared dressing. Set aside. The noodles will be on the chewy side.

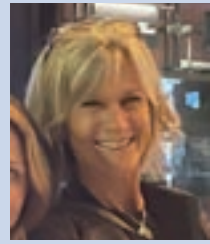
Meanwhile, heat a little bit of oil in a skillet or wok and add the drained pasta. Cook the pasta over medium until translucent and sticky. Transfer back to the bowl.

Add 1 tbsp. of oil to the pan and cook the carrots over medium-high heat, stirring often, for about one minute, or until the carrots are al dente. Push the carrots to the back of the pan. Add the yellow and green onion and continue to cook over medium heat until onions are becoming translucent. You don't want to overcook the veggies, so err on the underdone side.

Continue the process with bell peppers, eggplant, mushrooms and remove each veggie from the pan or wok once cooked to al dente. Cook the spinach last, and only for about one minute to allow it to be tender, but not stringy or mushy.

If adding beef or pork, add it to the pan with a little more oil after removing the spinach and cook to desired doneness. Remove from pan and add to the bowl with the noodles.

Add all of the cooked veggies to the noodles (and meat) in the bowl and toss with the remaining dressing. Serve with extra toasted sesame seeds scattered on top. This dish can be served cold, warm, or at room temperature. Store any leftovers in the refrigerator. Reheat the leftovers in the microwave to let the noodles become a bit chewy again.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



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Other ... continued

Contribute your family recipes to Moraga's 50th Anniversary Community Cookbook. This cookbook will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the town and will be a keepsake for your family for years to come. Be a part of history! Visit <https://cc.recipes/moraga>. Recipes are due Feb. 28. Cookbooks will be available to purchase beginning summer of 2024.

Volunteer Opportunity at Diablo Valley Literacy Council. "Each one teach one". English need not be your first language. No teaching experience is required. We will teach you how to be a tutor! The next workshop will be held Saturday, March 2, from 10 to noon via ZOOM & Saturday, March 9, from 10 to 1 p.m. in person at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church 4000 Clayton Road in Concord. Register at dvl-c4esl.org. For more information leave a message at (925) 685-3881

Celebration of Norouz, Persian New Year Celebration

tion and Spring Equinox on March 10 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wilder Art and Garden Center, Orinda. Open to the public, Family Friendly. Persian food & sweets, apparel, jewelry and accessories, pottery, bags and shoes.

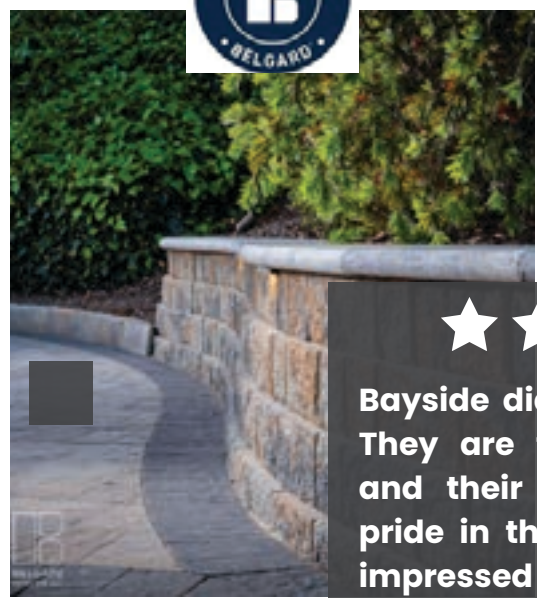
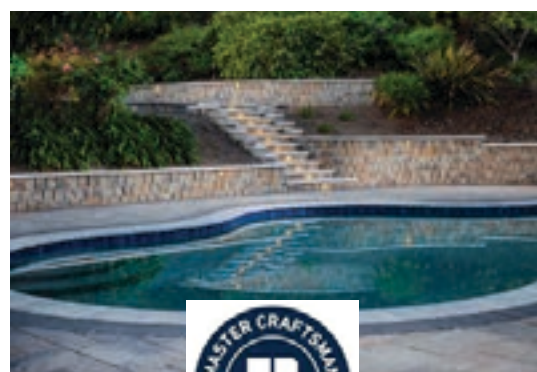
Moraga Historical Society presents resident train expert Sam Sperry for a fascinating discussion about the passenger and freight trains that once serviced our town. Join us as we go back in time to 1913, when the Oakland, Antioch & Eastern Railway's route between Oakland and Sacramento took commuters to work and pears to market. In 1928, with a merger of railroads, the 185-mile-long Sacramento Northern Railway was formed which included two stops in town: The Moraga Station and St. Mary's Station. Make your reservations now for Sunday, March 3 from 1 to 3 p.m. @ Hacienda de las Flores -- Casita Building, 2100 Donald Dr, Moraga. RSVP to Susan Sperry: ranchSusan@aol.com by Feb. 18. Moraga Historical Society members free, guests \$5. Limited seating.

Garden

"Plant Propagation for Fun!" will be the topic of the Moraga Garden Club's February meeting, by speaker Garth Jacob, former owner of Mt. Diablo Nursery. Feb. 15 at 9:30 a.m. Moraga Garden Club, Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St, Moraga. For many, gardening and fun are synonymous ergo there is never enough of either. Free, open to the public and welcome new members. Visit at: www.moragagardenclub.org.

Montelindo Garden Club presents "Continuing Tradition of Botanical Art," by speaker Lee McCaffree, botanical artist, on Friday, Feb. 16 at 9 a.m. Social time, 10:20 a.m. speaker. Learn about the history of botanical illustration and Lee's fascination with wildflowers that inspired her to learn and excel at her art. Lafayette Library Community Hall. Free. For more information, see www.montelindogarden.com/2024-meetings.html

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