

Recipe: Ayurvedically Inspired Japchae 잡채

Korean Sweet Potato Noodles and Vegetables

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Using Ayurvedic principles of nutrition can easily transform a family's favorite recipe into a healthier dish. Cooking with Ayurveda's awareness of food as medicine, I enhance the Korean cuisine I grew up eating.

Traditional Korean meals share similarities with Ayurvedically prepared meals, with an emphasis on eating foods to support one's health. However, many modern Korean dishes are now made to only satisfy the salty, sweet, and spicy cravings people seek.

Using Ayurvedic principles of cooking, I strive to create Korean cuisine with health and balance as the main ingredient in the dish.

A favorite Korean dish passed down to me by my mother is japchae. Japchae was first created in the 17th century for the royal family of the Joseon Dynasty in Korea. During this time Buddhism influenced the everyday lives and the food Korean people ate. A vegetarian diet was enjoyed by most and thus japchae, which translates to "mixed vegetables" consisted of only cooked vegetables at that time.[1]

It was around 1763 when sweet potatoes were first introduced to Korea from Japan, and then around 1930 when japchae included sweet potato starch noodles, dangmyeon. These noodles were introduced to Korea by the Chinese people, who have been making sweet potato starch noodles since the 1590s when sweet potatoes were brought to China.[2,3]

1 Ayurvedic perspective on japchae ingredients

Sweet potato starch noodles have similar energetic qualities to sweet potato. It is heavy, grounding with the sweet taste, balancing vata and pitta doshas.[4] Unlike sweet potatoes, sweet potato noodles have very little fiber. However, it does have a high amount of resistant starch.[7] The benefits of resistant starch are numerous, and mainly support the gut microbiome as it promotes the production of short-chain fatty acids (SCFA). The SCFA play a key role in decreasing inflammation in the colon.[8]

Seasonal vegetables are recommended. In the summer favor vegetables that have bitter, astringent tastes, and cooling vegetables to balance the heat of pitta dosha. Try broccoli, kale, spinach, Swiss chard, and zucchini.[5] In the fall and winter months, favor vegetables that have sweet, sour, and salty tastes. Choose foods that offer heavy, oily, moist,

and warm qualities to balance the cold, dry, and mobile qualities of vata dosha. Consider using more root vegetables, Brussel sprouts, and smaller amounts of bitter greens.[6] Enjoy in Spring vegetables with pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes. Balance the heavy and moist qualities of kapha dosha with light, dry, and warming qualities.[9]

Shitake mushrooms when cooked have a sweet taste, is light, and balances vata, pitta with neutral effect on kapha dosha.[10]



Figure 1: Japchae

2 Spices

Fresh ginger is pungent and sweet in taste, with a heating potency; balances *vāta*, *kapha* and increases *pitta doṣa*. Fresh turmeric is pungent and bitter in taste, with a heating potency; balances *vāta*, *kapha*, and is neutral for *pitta doṣa*. Garlic is pungent, bitter, astringent, and sweet, with a heating potency; balances *vāta*, *kapha* and increases *pitta doṣa*.^[11] Sweet onion sauteed has a sweet and mildly pungent taste. It has a mildly heating potency; balances *vāta*, may slightly increase *kapha*, and has a neutral effect for *pitta doṣa*.^[12] Coriander is pungent and bitter in taste, with a cooling potency; balances *vāta*, *kapha*, and *pitta doṣas*. Cumin is pungent and bitter in taste, with a cooling potency; balances *vāta*, *kapha*, and *pitta doṣas*. Fennel is pungent and sweet in taste, with a cooling potency; balances *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha doṣas*.^[11]

Sesame oil taste is sweet, bitter and when toasted, is also astringent and pungent. Balances *vata* and *kapha doshas* and slightly increase *pitta dosha*.^[13]

Tamari is a rich fermented soybean sauce without the addition of wheat and gluten. It offers salty and sour tastes, balancing *vāta doṣa*, but may aggravate *kapha* and *pitta doṣas*.^[14]

Fresh, organic, local, and seasonal ingredients offer the highest nutrition and *prāṇa*-life vitality, to support our mind, body, and spirit.

3 Ingredients

Serves 8-10

1. 8 ounces of dangmyeon noodles - sweet potato starch noodles
2. 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil (to drizzle over cooked dungeon noodles)
3. 3 baby bok choy
4. 1 medium-sized sweet bell pepper, cut into thin strips
5. 1 medium sweet purple onion, sliced thinly
6. 2 cups of seasonal baby greens (spinach, kale, arugula)*
7. Mineral salt
8. Fresh ground black pepper
9. Avocado oil to stir fry



Figure 2: Raw Ingredients

4 Tamari Sesame Oil Sauce

1. 1 garlic clove, minced *
2. 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger root*
3. 1/2 teaspoon grated fresh turmeric root
4. 1/8 teaspoon of each ground spice: cumin, coriander, fennel
5. 2 -3 tablespoons maple syrup
6. 1/4 cup gluten-free tamari sauce *
7. 1/4 cup water
8. 1-2 teaspoons of naturally fermented rice wine vinegar or sweet white balsamic vinegar*
9. 1/4 cup dark sesame oil

5 Preparation

1. Cook dangmyeon noodles according to the directions on the package. Drain dangmyeon noodles and place them back into the pot. Drizzle with 2 Tbs of toasted sesame oil to prevent noodles from sticking. Place lid on top of the pot and keep noodles warm.
2. Prep vegetables: rinse, chop, slice, and mince. Place them on cutting board or platter, keeping them separated.
3. Heat a medium size sauté pan, and add 1 teaspoon of Avocado oil to the pan.
4. Sauté vegetables separately starting with onions and then firmer vegetables such as the whites of bok choy. Add a pinch of salt while sautéing vegetables. Be sure not to overcook, keeping vegetables crunchy.
5. Do not sauté soft and tender greens such as baby spinach, baby arugula or baby kale. Add these soft greens to noodles with a pinch of mineral salt. The heat from the noodles and sautéed vegetables will “cook” the soft and tender greens.
6. Place each batch of stir-fried vegetables over noodles.
7. In a small pot, sauté on medium-low heat, sesame oil, and spices, then add the remaining ingredients for the Tamari Sesame Oil Sauce. Cook on medium heat until it comes to a low boil, then turn down the heat to low and cook for another minute.
8. Strain Tamari Sesame Oil Sauce in a fine metal strainer. Compost or discard solids.
9. Add Tamari Sesame Oil Sauce over noodles and vegetables. Mix carefully.
10. Serve warm or at room temperature. May serve as a side dish with a protein of your choice.

6 Note

1. Sweet potato starch noodles, dangmyeon, may be purchased at an Asian grocery store.
2. Use seasonal vegetables that are best for your dosha.
3. Garlic clove is optional for vata and kapha and omit for pitta dosha.
4. Fresh ground ginger-use 1 teaspoon for pitta dosha.
5. Use coconut aminos instead of tamari for pitta dosha.
6. Use 1 teaspoon of naturally fermented rice wine vinegar for pitta dosha.

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