



Cold noodle salad with sesame-lime dressing

Serves 3 to 4 (or more when served on a picnic table among lots of other food)

8 ounces dried udon noodles

One 1-inch piece ginger

1 garlic clove

3 tablespoons soy sauce or tamari

2 tablespoons well-stirred tahini

Juice from 1 lime

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

1 tablespoon pure maple syrup

½ teaspoon (or more) chili-garlic sauce

Salt (optional)

One 8 to 10-ounce bag coleslaw mix

1 lightly packed cup cilantro leaves

Boil the noodles

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt the water well. Cook the noodles until al dente, about 4 minutes or according to the package instructions.

Drain and rinse under cold water.

Make the dressing

Peel your piece of ginger using a knife, a peeler, or the edge of a spoon. Finely grate the ginger into a large bowl. You'll have about 1 teaspoon.

Peel the garlic clove and finely grate it into the bowl.

Add the soy sauce, tahini, lime juice, rice vinegar, maple syrup and chili-garlic sauce to the bowl and whisk it all together. It will taste quite savory and punchy from the soy sauce, lime, and vinegar, but it will mellow when you add everything.

Finish the salad

Rinse the noodles again under cold water if they are sticking together and shake well to remove any excess water. Add them to the bowl and toss with the dressing, making sure every noodle gets coated.

Add the coleslaw mix and toss to incorporate.

Soon before serving, roughly chop the cilantro leaves and toss them in to incorporate. Taste and add more chili garlic sauce, if desired, and season with a little salt if necessary, then serve.

Make ahead note

Noodle salads and grain salads tend to be greedy for seasoning. If they hang out for too long or if you refrigerate them to serve later, you might need to adjust the seasoning a bit by adding salt or a little more soy sauce and/or vinegar.

Fun for kids

- Whisk together the dressing.
- Toss the noodles with the dressing.
- Add the coleslaw and cilantro and toss.

The short version

- Cook the udon, then drain and rinse under cold water.
- Grate the ginger and garlic into a bowl. Whisk in the tahini, rice vinegar, maple syrup and chili-garlic sauce.
- Add the noodles and toss. Add the coleslaw mix followed by the roughly chopped chopped cilantro and toss. Adjust the seasoning and serve.

Swaps

- Instead of udon noodles, use wide rice noodles. It will be a different eating experience, but it will be good.
- Instead of lime juice, use lemon.
- Instead of rice vinegar, use apple cider vinegar.
- Instead of maple syrup, use honey.
- Instead of chile-garlic sauce, use sriracha.
- Instead of cilantro, use half the amount of fresh mint and/or scallions.

Bonus points

- You could add some sliced scallions to the salad.
- You could add additional crisp vegetables. Some ideas: Slivered snow peas, more grated carrots, thinly sliced kohlrabi, thinly sliced daikon. If you want to add cucumber, I'd do so at the last minute because otherwise, it will make the salad watery. You could also add slivered bell pepper, but again, wait until the last minute so it doesn't get soggy.
- To add more crunch and a richer flavor, you could toss in some chopped toasted peanuts.
- Serve alongside grilled chicken, grilled shrimp, or strips of warmed seasoned press tofu.