

The Dan-Dan Noodle Recipe That Got RJ Through 2020

As I mentioned on [the podcast](#), this is a recipe my partner and I made up to recreate the taste of the vegetarian dan-dan noodle dish at one of our favorite restaurants (that doesn't taste the same when we ordered it via delivery). I also started cooking almost every day for the first time in my life this year, and this dish has become an easy, nutritious, delicious staple of my small rotation of dishes. It is a recipe, again, we TOTALLY made up and amounts will be approximate and some of the things I say will seem obvious to you if you are not new to cooking like me and it will be missing some key ingredients from the dish as most restaurants prepare it, but it tastes good and it works for me.

You will need:

- Peanut butter
- Chili-garlic sauce
- Neutral oil/Olive oil (either or both)
- Soy sauce
- Water
- Garlic
- Ginger (optional)
- Chili powder
- Spinach
- Tofu (medium-firm)
- Peanuts
- Noodles (we find udon best recreates the chewy texture of the handmade noodles from the restaurant, but you can use any noodles you prefer)

1. SAUCE: In a bowl, combining 2-3 large spoonfuls of peanut butter, 1 teaspoon of chili-garlic oil (more for a spicier sauce), 1 teaspoon of neutral oil (or olive oil if that's what you have), and 1 teaspoon of soy sauce. Mix and add spoonfuls of water until the sauce becomes smooth and thin enough to drip from the spoon.

You can also wait and use the water that you boil the noodles in, which will have some starch probably, which holds the sauce together better, I guess??? You can also add



some of the excess soy sauce/oil/chili powder mix that you will get after preparing the toppings in the next step, but that's completely optional. If the sauce is getting TOO thin, add more peanut butter. If it's too thick, add more water. If it's too spicy, add more oil or water. If it's too bland, add more chili-garlic sauce (for more spice) or soy sauce (for more salt).

2. TOPPINGS: chop or mince 2-3 cloves of garlic (and optionally, mince a small amount of ginger) and fry in olive oil (or neutral oil) in a wok or a large frying pan. When they start to brown, add tofu - about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a ~12oz-15oz block, cut into cubes. Sprinkle a light coating of chili powder over the mix. Toss occasionally. When the tofu cubes start taking on color, add spinach - as much as you want, I usually do about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a 10 oz bag. Add a few splashes of soy sauce. Toss until the spinach wilts.
3. NOODLES: boil 3 single-serving packages of udon noodles for about 3 minutes, until they become loose and soft.

You should probably start these before you add the spinach in the previous step (since it will cook up quickly), but if you didn't, you know, whatever, it'll be fine; if your spinach isn't piping hot when you put the dish together it's not going to be a big deal.

4. PUTTING IT TOGETHER: Drain the noodles. Portion them into two large bowls. Portion the toppings over the noodles, then the sauce over that, and then add a handful of peanuts (chopped or whole) over it all.

TA-DA!!!!!! Feel free to modify this recipe to your heart's content. I still experiment with it all the time! It's whatever!!!!!!