

## Udon Vegetable “Pho” with Cashew-Chili Paste

Chicken noodle soup is great and all, but I’m most excited by the panoply of broth-based soups that most Asian cuisines offer. There’s Vietnamese pho, with its fragrant broth and all those bean sprouts and licorice-scented basil leaves you get to pile in yourself, Thai soups like Tom Kha with plenty of ginger and coconut milk, and the whole family of Japanese ramens . . . here’s my mixed-race version, made with Japanese udon noodles, a gingery cashew-chili paste, and all the fun pho fixins you could want. Of course, you can also use rice or soba noodles, and add thin chicken or beef slices, if you prefer.

Although the ingredient list is long, preparation is actually quite simple: you warm the broth (with or without extra flavoring agents, depending on what you have), boil the udon noodles and the veggies together, and top the soup with a quick cashew paste that’s as spicy as you want to make it.

TIME: 30 minutes

SHOP: UP TO 3 DAYS AHEAD

SERVES: 4

*For the broth:*

12 cups vegetable or chicken broth (if you have it, homemade is best)

One or all of the following:

- 1 star anise
- 1 2" piece ginger, cut into thin strips
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 2" piece lemongrass, cut into thin strips
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4 whole peppercorns

Salt

*For the cashew-chili paste:*

- 1 1/4 cups natural cashew butter
- 1/4 cup boiling water
- 1/2 cup chopped scallions (white and green parts)
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons freshly grated ginger
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup chopped roasted cashews (optional)
- 1 tablespoon (or more) sriracha, sambal oelek, or other Asian chili sauce

*For the soup:*

4 large button mushrooms (or 1 portobello), thinly sliced

3 cups quick-cooking vegetables, such as snap peas, broccoli florets, sliced bell peppers, or asparagus pieces

1 (24-ounce) package fresh udon noodles, or 4 individual packets

1 (8-ounce) package bean sprouts

Big handful of regular, red, or Thai basil leaves

1 lime, quartered

First, make the broth: combine all the broth ingredients except the salt in a large soup pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to a simmer, and cook for about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the paste: combine all the paste ingredients in a bowl, starting with just a tablespoon of the chili sauce, and stir with a fork until everything is well combined. Taste and add more chili sauce, if desired (you can also let each person add additional spiciness to their own soup). Set aside.

Using a strainer or a slotted spoon, remove the flavorings from the broth and discard. Season the broth to taste with the salt. Add the mushrooms, vegetables, and noodles to the broth, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the noodles are warmed through and the vegetables are cooked al dente.

Divide the noodles, vegetables, and broth between four large bowls, and garnish with bean sprouts, basil leaves, and big scoops of the cashew paste. Squeeze lime quarters over the soup, and enjoy hot.