

日本の夏：そうめん

Summertime in Japan: *Sōmen* Noodles On-the-Rocks



Summertime in Japan is hot and humid... made bearable only by big bowls of *sōmen* noodles served “on the rocks.” Brought to table floating in deep, glass bowls filled with glacier-like chunks of ice and water, thread-thin *sōmen* are served with condiments such as chopped scallions, grated ginger and shredded *shiso* that are added to an intensely seasoned soy-based dip sauce called *men tsuyu*. As noodles are lifted from their icy bath and dipped in *men tsuyu* the sauce gets diluted, so resist the temptation of thinning it from the start with water or stock.

Sōmen Noodles On-the-Rocks to serve 4.

Dipping sauce:

- 1/3 cup seasoned soy concentrate (***Bannō-jōyu*** OR ***Shōjin Bannō-jōyu***); A recipe for deeply seasoned soy concentrate (*Bannō-jōyu*) can be downloaded from my website: go to the [Kitchen Culture archives for July 2, 2019](#). A vegan version (*Shōjin Bannō-jōyu*) is included in the same reference sheet + 2 tablespoons water OR stock (a simple Kelp Alone all-purpose stock can be downloaded from the [Kitchen Culture archives for November 28, 2019](#))
- OR
- 1/2 cup ***Ni-Ban Dashi*** (Secondary Stock), a by-product of making the seasoned soy concentrate

6 bunches (each 50 grams or about 1 and 1/2 ounces) dried *sōmen* noodles

Condiments:

- 1 small knob fresh ginger, scraped and grated (about 2 teaspoons)
- 4 or 5 *shiso* leaves, tightly rolled and cut into very thin shreds
- 2 tablespoons white sesame seeds, freshly toasted, cracked or coarsely ground

Make the dipping sauce ahead of time so it can be well chilled in advance of serving. I strongly recommend you make at least 2 cups of the *Bannō-jōyu* sauce (it will keep for 6-8 weeks in the refrigerator).

Cook the noodles using the *sashi mizu*, or “adding water” technique; refer to the [\[\[SOMEN noodles buy-store-cook\]\]](#) document included in this post. Rinse the noodles well under running cold water to remove surface starch before draining them again. Cooked *sōmen* tend to stretch and go soggy if allowed to sit in water for too long. If need be briefly re-rinse and drain again just before serving.

Fill deep, individual bowls with ice cubes. Glass bowls are particularly favored in Japan because the tinkling sounds made by ice cubes clinking against the sides of the bowl have a cooling effect. Lay the cooked and drained noodles over the ice cubes, then gently pour in cold water, until the noodles barely float.

Divide the chilled dipping sauce into four small but deep bowls. Place condiments on individual small plates: a small mound of grated ginger, a small tuft of shredded *shiso*, and a small pile of toasted sesame seeds. Each diner seasons his/her dipping sauce with condiments to taste before lifting noodles from the ice water, dunking them briefly in the dip sauce, and slurping (a noisy action called *susuru* in Japanese) with appreciation!