

NYŪMEN・煮麺

Sōmen Noodles Served in Piping Hot Broth



Sōmen noodles are usually served chilled, often on chunks of ice. Dipped into a deeply flavored soy-based sauce to which condiments such as ginger and scallions have been added, it becomes a survival strategy for hot, humid days.

But in Kagawa Prefecture (Shikoku), historically a region known for its *sōmen*, the thread-thin, hand-stretched, wheat noodle is enjoyed year-round. In the Andoh household, **NYŪMEN** (*sōmen* noodles served in piping hot broth) makes for a quick, belly-warming light meal on chilly days.

The classic version of *nyūmen* features a subtly nuanced savory broth. Spicy flavorings such as *yuzu koshō* or *shichimi tōgarashi* are rarely used, though on occasion, a pinch of tongue-tingling *sanshō* is added as a finishing touch. There are those who add curry roux, in the same way that some Japanese favor curry udon.

Classic *nyūmen* is a clear broth soup-noodle dish. However, *sōmen* is added to miso soup (especially in the summertime in the Kansai region). When *sōmen* is placed in miso soup it is no longer called *nyūmen* though. Instead, it is called *sōmen iri miso shiru*, or "*sōmen* in miso soup."

This **BASIC RECIPE** calls for Sanuki Sea Stock, enriched with *iriko* (dried sardines also called *niboshi*). For those who prefer the smoky flavor of *katsuo-bushi*, try a Standard Sea Stock or Smoky Sea Stock. For those who eat plant-based exclusively, use either Kelp Alone Stock or mushroom-enriched Sankai Dashi. Links to all these stocks are embedded in the Kitchen Culture blog post and the Kitchen Culture Cooking Club PROJECT post for February 20, 2022.

Serves 2.

Topping options, Vegetables: choose 2,3 or more for a total of 7 ounces/200 grams
3 oz/85 gr **MUSHROOMS** (*shimeji*, *énoki* and *shiitaké*), trimmed and sliced
2 oz/55 gr **CARROTS**, peeled or scraped and sliced
2.5 oz/70 gr **HAKUSAI** cabbage, cut into bite-sized pieces
2-3 stalks **MITSUBA**, trimmed and cut into short lengths
2 oz/55 gr **SPINACH**, trimmed, washed, torn into bite-sized pieces
1 Tablespoon (0.5 oz/10 gr) **WAKAMÉ**, soaked in water for 5 minutes, drained (DO NOT use water from soaking *wakamé* as stock; it contains unwanted minerals)

Topping options, Protein: choose one or more

1 slice **FRIED TÔFU**, blanched, blotted to remove excess oil, cut in strips

KÔJI-POACHED CHICKEN (6 oz/170 gr), sliced or shredded

Recipe: <https://tasteofculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/KOJI-POACHED-chicken.pdf>

6 slices **KAMABOKO** (fish sausage) (total 2.8 oz/80 gr)

1 egg, lightly beaten for **TAMAGO TOJI** (egg drop)

Topping options, Miscellaneous:

UMÉBOSHI (pickled plums), flesh pulled away from the pit

YAKI NORI (toasted laver), cut in thin strips

Optional Condiments: grated ginger and/or scallions

Broth:

2 and 1/2 cups (500 cc) DASHI (Sanuki Sea Stock, or other stock listed in intro)

1 and 1/2 teaspoons *usukuchi shōyu* (light-colored soy sauce)

1 and 1/2 teaspoons *mirin*

3 bunches *sōmen* noodles (50 grams each)

Make the BROTH:



Put your stock of choice in a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer. Add firmer vegetables such as carrots first; simmer for 1 minute. Add any mushrooms and simmer for 1 more minute. Skim away any froth before seasoning with light-colored soy sauce and *mirin*.

Turn off the heat before adding any *hakusai* or spinach (*mitsuba* is best added at the last minute). The soup will be re-heat just before serving.

Prepare your noodles in a separate, large pot filled with several quarts/liters of water. Bring the water to a vigorous boil over high heat. Add the noodles, scattering them like pick-up-sticks. *Sōmen* are traditionally cooked using the *bikkuri mizu* ("surprise water") or *sashi mizu* ("adding extra water") technique:

When the water in the pot returns to a boil, it is time for a pleasant surprise: *bikkuri mizu* that temporarily cools things down (it breaks the boil to a gentle simmer). This procedure allows heat to be retained at the core of each noodle allowing them to become tender. Yet the surface of each thin noodle strand is cooled, protecting it from the harsh boiling water.

While waiting for the water to return to a boil, ladle out some of the of the starchy hot water into your soup bowls. This will reduce the volume of water in the pot (allowing it to return to a boil faster and avoid messy boil-over). At the same time the starchy hot water will warm your soup bowls so that you can enjoy piping hot soup noodles.



As soon as the water returns to a boil, turn off the heat and strain the noodles through a fine-meshed colander. Using a shower attachment, quickly rinse noodles to remove excess starch. Drain thoroughly.

Pour out the hot water that had been warming the serving bowls and divvy up the cooked noodles between the bowls.

Re-heat the soup and top off the bowls of noodles with the soup. Add any last-minute greens or condiments. Serve piping hot.

