

Japchae (Korean Stir Fried Vegetables)*

(Korea)

Submitted by: Ms. Jeanni Chin



Japchae (잡채) literally means “mixed vegetables.” However, the main ingredient of this classic dish is Korean sweet potato starch noodles (dangmyeon, 당면), also known as glass noodles. Japchae is an essential dish for traditional holidays and special occasions. For traditional japchae, the chewy and springy noodles are nicely paired with thin strips of beef (or pork) and various vegetables in a slightly sweet and savory sauce. It’s also common to add an egg garnish (jidan, 지단). To make vegan japchae, simply omit the meat and add a little more mushrooms or other vegetables. Pan-fried tofu is also a good substitute for the meat.

Ingredients:

7 ounces Korean potato starch noodles (dangmyeon, 당면)
1 carrot (about 3 ounces)
1/2 medium onion, preferably sweet variety, (4 to 5 ounces)
2 scallions
4 ounces lean beef (sirloin or rib eye), bulgogi (korean marinated beef rib eye), pork loin, chicken or tofu for vegetarian dish
3 to 4 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms (or 4 to 5 dried shiitake, soaked until plump) Or oyster mushrooms, wood ear mushrooms or button mushrooms. See note 1.
6 ounces fresh spinach (preferably a bunch of spinach)
oil for stir frying
salt
egg garnish (jidan) - optional

For Sauce:

3½ tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons sugar (or brown sugar) You can use a little less if you want.
2 tablespoons sesame oil
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1 tablespoon roasted sesame seeds (optional)
black pepper to taste

Instructions:

Clean all the ingredients. Cut the carrot into match sticks. Thinly slice the onion. Run the knife through the white parts of the scallions lengthwise, if thick, and then cut into about 2-inch long pieces. Remove the stems from the mushrooms, and slice into 1/4-inch thin strips. Cut the meat into thin 2-inch long strips.



Combine all the sauce ingredients in a small bowl and mix well until the sugar is dissolved.



In a large non-stick pan, bring about 5 cups of water to a boil, and cook the noodles until completely translucent and soft (6 to 8 minutes). Drain in a strainer and rinse under cold running water. Drain well. Roughly cut the noodles with a pair of kitchen shears or a knife into 6 -7 inch lengths. Transfer to a large mixing bowl. Mix well with 3 tablespoons of the prepared sauce.



Fill the same pan with 2 cups of water. When water boils, blanch the spinach only until wilted. Drain quickly and shock in cold water. Squeeze out water, run a knife through the squeezed spinach a couple of times, and lightly season with salt.



Add 1/2 tablespoon of oil to the skillet, and stir fry the noodles over medium to medium high heat, stirring frequently, until translucent and a bit sticky (about 4 minutes). Transfer back to the mixing bowl.



Add 1/2 tablespoon of oil to the pan, and stir fry the carrot over medium high heat, sprinkling with a pinch of salt. When the carrot sticks are a half way cooked, about a minute, push them to one side of the pan to make room for the onion slices. Stir-fry the onion slices until translucent, sprinkling with a pinch of salt. Stir-in the scallion and cook briefly. Do not overcook. The vegetables should be crisp. Transfer to the bowl with the noodles.



Add the beef and mushrooms along with 2 tablespoons of the prepared sauce and cook until the meat is cooked through, 2 - 3 minutes. Transfer to the bowl with the noodles.



Add the spinach and the remaining sauce to the bowl with all other prepared ingredients. Toss well by hand. Adjust the seasoning to taste by adding a little more (start with 1/2 teaspoon) soy sauce and/or sugar as necessary.



Optional: Crack one egg into a small bowl, mix with a little salt and pepper, cook on low heat. Flip once the egg is almost cooked (like a pancake), flip. Once cooked, slice into matchsticks to add to the dish.

*Adapted from <https://www.koreanbapsang.com/japchae-korean-stir-fried-starch/>