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Sesame Noodles in the Dojo

INGREDIENTS:

Sesame Peanut Sauce

1/3 cup Chinese sesame paste or tahini
1/4 cup warm water
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
1 tablespoon smooth, unsalted natural peanut butter
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon dark agave nectar
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil

Noodles and Salad

4 ounces uncooked soba or udon noodles
1 sheet nori seaweed
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
3 cups shredded romaine or iceberg lettuce
1 seedless cucumber, peeled and sliced into thin strips
1 large red ripe tomato, seeded and diced
3 scallions, green part only, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

SERVES: 2

TIME: 30 MINUTES

This is my tribute to Dojo's Restaurant, a once frozen-in-time enclave nestled near Washington Square Park in Manhattan's West Village that's kept countless NYU students and an eclectic mix of downtown folks alive with cheap yet substantial eats for decades. As of this writing the entire restaurant endured heavy renovations, including the menu, which now sadly reads like any other generic pan-Asian café. These noodles are a throwback to what I loved most about the honest, filling fare Dojo's slung so well for years.

Their cold sesame noodles are not the best and are far from authentic, but nothing else will do when I need a fix. The strange choice of toppings—tomato, cucumber, and strips of nori—are unconventional but habit forming!

1 Pour all of the sesame sauce ingredients into a food processor and pulse until smooth. Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning by adding a little more soy sauce, vinegar, or agave as desired.

2 Prepare the noodles according to package directions, but slightly undercook them to al dente. While the

noodles cook, use kitchen scissors to cut the nori sheet into long, thin matchsticks. Drain the noodles and rinse with plenty of cold water, then toss with the toasted sesame oil.

3 Fill serving bowls with shredded lettuce. Toss the noodles with the sesame sauce and mound on top of the lettuce. Top with the cucumber, tomato, scallions, and nori strips. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve right now!

THE SPIN: Sesame tahini tastes perfectly delicious in this recipe, but for authentic flavor, seek out Chinese sesame paste in Asian grocery stores. This dense sesame paste is made from unhulled seeds and has a bold, nutty flavor and a darker color than tahini.