

SPICY PORK NOODLE SOUP WITH TOASTED GARLIC

Serves 4 • 45 minutes

This soup is about as flexible as it gets, which is good for the days where you're excited to make something but might be out of, say, 30% of the ingredients. While this is called pork noodle soup, if you don't eat pork you can certainly use turkey or chicken, but you may want to add a few more tablespoons of fat when browning the meat, as poultry tends to be much leaner. Pea shoots can be elusive depending on where you're shopping, but don't stress—you can easily use other leafy greens that wilt down easily into broth (I prefer the more tender spinach and swiss chard, but kale will work as well). Don't leave out the raw onion at the end, 100% inspired by the chicken pho I order at least once a week from October to April.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons neutral oil

8 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 pound ground pork (you can also use turkey or chicken if you don't do pork)

1 ½ teaspoons red-pepper flakes, plus more

Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup soy sauce or tamari, plus more

1 large bunch pea leaves, spinach, swiss chard or kale, thick stems removed, leaves coarsely torn or chopped

2 tablespoons finely grated fresh ginger (from about a 2-inch piece)

6 ounces rice noodles (thick- or thin-cut), cooked and drained

½ medium red, yellow or white onion or 4 scallions, thinly sliced

1–2 cups cilantro, leaves and tender stems, coarsely chopped

Fish sauce, optional

Instructions

- 1 Heat oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat.
- 2 Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the slices become nicely toasted and golden brown, 2–3 minutes. Using a spoon (preferably slotted, will make life easier), transfer garlic to a small bowl and set aside.
- 3 Add pork and to the pot, and season with salt and pepper. Cook, using a wooden spoon or spatula to break up large pieces (you aren't making meatballs here), until the pork is well browned and in small bite-size pieces, 8–10 minutes. Add red pepper flakes.
- 4 Add soy sauce, cilantro stems and 6 cups of water. Bring to a simmer and cook for about 5 to 8 minutes or so, until the pork is very tender and the broth tastes impossibly good. (Give it a taste and season with salt, pepper, red-pepper flakes and soy sauce, if you want.) Add pea leaves, and all of the ginger. Stir to wilt the leaves and soften the onion and season with fish sauce if you like.
- 5 To serve, ladle soup over noodles and top with onion, cilantro and the toasted garlic chips.

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