

The Best Shio Ramen with Pork and Guanciale

The luxury and complexity – and rampant popularity – of ramen belie the reality that it is, at its essence, a humble bowl of noodles. It seems easy, but can you imagine making this at home? Of course you can. Sure it takes time, but most of that time doesn't require you to pay any attention, so feel free to queue up something to binge watch. Once the stock is made and the eggs are marinated, a weeknight bowl only requires a little assembly.

Shio means 'salt' in Japanese, but don't worry; it's not salty. The term refers to the clear soup that originated from Chinese immigrants that settled in Western Japan.

The add-ons you top the ramen with are what personalize it. Pick and choose from our carefully curated list, or look in your fridge and create your own hodgepodge, from leafy vegetables to sliced mushrooms to roast chicken or firm tofu.

Ingredients

dashi broth

1 strip dried kombu seaweed
1/2 cup dried bonito flakes

soy sauce eggs

4 eggs
1/4 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup mirin
1/2 cup dashi broth

shio stock

1 pound chicken wings
1/2 pound baby back or spare ribs, cut into singles
2 ounces guanciale
1/2 bunch scallions, cut into 2-inch pieces
1-inch ginger, cut into 4 rounds
2 heads garlic, cut in half crosswise
1 large carrot, cut into 2-inch pieces
1 teaspoon salt

toppings

1 pound boneless pork loin cutlets, cut into 8 thin slices

1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil
1 teaspoon mirin
4 ounces guanciale, tough rind removed, cut into strips or diced
1½ ounces thinly sliced guanciale
4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
5 ounces baby spinach or roughly chopped nappa cabbage
1 cup thinly sliced scallion
Soy sauce eggs (recipe above), halved
1¼ pounds thin wheat ramen noodles, preferably fresh
Nori seaweed sheet or strips, optional
Togarashi, optional

Directions

for the dashi broth

Put the kombu in a medium pot with 4 cups water and bring to a simmer over medium heat for about 15 minutes. Then turn off the heat and add bonito flakes, stirring gently to combine, and let sit for 10 minutes. Drain the broth through a fine mesh strainer. Do not squeeze the bonito flakes or the broth will turn cloudy. Discard solids. Refrigerate if not using immediately.

for the soy sauce eggs

Prepare an ice bath in a large bowl. Bring a small pot of water to a boil, then reduce heat to a brisk simmer. Add the eggs to the pot and cook for 7 minutes for a semi-soft yolk, or longer if you prefer a harder yolk. Meanwhile, mix the soy sauce, mirin and 1/2 cup of dashi broth in a small bowl and transfer to a resealable bag set in a bowl. Transfer the cooked eggs to the ice bath to chill, then peel. Add the peeled eggs to the bag of soy sauce marinade, seal the bag and refrigerate. Allow the eggs to marinate at least 24 hours, turning occasionally.

for the shio stock

Place the chicken wings and the ribs in a large pot and cover with cold water. Bring the water to a boil and continue on rolling boil for 5 minutes. Drain the meat and rinse under running water. Wash the pot. Place the meat back into the clean pot and add the guanciale, scallions, ginger, garlic and carrot. Add enough cold water to cover the ingredients by about an inch. Bring to a boil, then cover the pot and reduce the heat to a simmer. Simmer, covered, for 3 hours. Strain the stock through a fine mesh strainer, discarding solids. Stock can be refrigerated for 2 to 3 days, or frozen for 3 months.

Heating the shio-dashi stock & assembling the bowl

Bring 5 cups of the shio stock, 1½ cups of the dashi broth and 1 teaspoon salt to a simmer in a large pot. Keep at a simmer as you prepare the toppings.

Marinate pork tenderloin slices in a shallow bowl with the soy sauce, sesame oil and mirin, turning slices to coat in the marinade. Set aside.

In a large non-stick skillet, cook the guanciale on medium-low heat in a dry pan, stirring occasionally, until fat is rendered and the meat is crispy, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to a paper-towel lined plate. Add the garlic slices and cook on low heat, being careful not to burn, stirring until golden and crisp, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to the plate with the guanciale. Drain the pan of all but about 1 tablespoon of oil. Turn up heat to medium-high and cook the spinach or cabbage, adding salt to taste and tossing until wilted, about 1 minute. Transfer to another plate.

When the stock is simmering, add the marinated pork slices, discarding the marinade, and poach until just cooked, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to the plate with the spinach. Keep the stock at a simmer and add the noodles, gently stirring to separate them. When the noodles are soft, 2 to 3 minutes, remove and divide evenly the noodles and broth among four individual soup bowls.

To serve, arrange the toppings on the noodles, evenly dividing the pork, spinach and guanciale, plus one halved soy sauce egg. Garnish each bowl with sliced scallion, garlic chips and a piece of Nori seaweed piece, if using. Sprinkle with togarashi, if desired, and serve.

Cook's Notes

Togarashi is a dry ground red pepper spice mixture that is served sprinkled on top of ramen noodle soups, can be found in most supermarkets with an Asian section.

Ramen noodles are traditional, but udon noodles would work, too, if it's the only fresh noodle you can find.

The rich stock is worth every second it takes to make, but you can substitute a good quality chicken stock. But make the quick dashi recipe – that doesn't take much time – and use it to enrich the chicken stock.

total time: 3 hours 45 minutes, plus 24 hours marinating time for the eggs

active prep: 1 hour

serves: 4

difficulty: moderate