

SOBA SALAD

What you need

3 bunches of dry soba noodles
100g rocket/arugula
1 avocado
1 punnet cherry tomatoes
1 large egg
12 green olives (Sicilian are ideal)
Toasted sesame seeds, to garnish

Dressing

100ml Tsuyu (Japanese noodle base, diluted)
2tsp Japanese soy sauce
2tsp vegetable oil (or grapeseed, something neutral)
1/2 tsp sesame oil

Don't make this recipe without: olives, avocado

What to do

1. Put a pot of water on the boil. If it boils before you're ready to cook the soba, which is the very last step — just turn it off. Beat an egg with a touch of salt and white pepper, and heat a small pan with some vegetable oil. Wipe the excess oil with a paper towel, and use this to re-grease the pan between sheets.
2. Make sure the pan is very hot, and pour in a tablespoon or so of the egg mixture. Spin the pan around immediately to spread the egg out as thinly and evenly as possible. Flip the egg over after a few seconds to brown the other side, and then remove from the pan. The egg should be paper thin, but not dry.
3. Once the egg is not too hot, cut finely into 5mm strips and set aside. One egg should yield 4–5 sheets using a small pan.
4. Wash the rocket and slice the cherry tomatoes in half. Arrange them on a plate/bowl, leaving room for the soba and other elements to sit in the middle. Peel and dice an avocado into 2cm cubes. Squeeze some lemon juice if you are preparing the elements in advance, and set aside.
5. Chop up the olives as finely as possible, and drizzle olive oil over it to form a rough paste.

Continued on Page 2 >

Yields 4 serves as a main, or 6 as a side

Preparation 15 minutes

Cooking 30 minutes

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6. The main component of the dressing is Tsuyu, which is a soup base and is made from fish or seaweed stock, sugar and soy sauce. This brand must be diluted by 3 parts water, so to make 100ml of the tsuyu, put 25ml of the concentrate and add 75ml water. Add soy sauce, vegetable oil and sesame oil. Control the sweet/salty balance by slowly adding the soy sauce, as different brands of tsuyu vary in sweetness. Be careful not to add too much sesame oil as it's really intense — you only need a few drops per person.
7. Cook the soba, following the instructions on the packet. They should be a touch over *al dente*, because when you chill them they firm up a little. Once they are cooked, drain the noodles and place under cold running water immediately until they are well chilled.
8. Assemble the dish by adding avocado, a mound of soba noodles, some egg and the chopped olives. Finish by sprinkling some toasted sesame seeds over the top.

Notes

You only need 2/3 of a bunch of soba for one serve because of all the extra stuff that goes with it, so 3 bunches should be plenty for 4 people as a main. Please don't skip the chopped olives! Bright green Sicilian olives are the best for this dish, but plain green olives (without stuffings/marinades) work fine as well.