

HERITAGE CUISINE: NOODLES



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HISTORY OF NOODLES

As of 2018, about 103 billion servings of instant noodles are consumed worldwide. Noodles have always been a popular dish due to their versatility. Whether stir-fried or served with soup, served hot or cold, people enjoy eating this dish in various forms. However, have you ever wondered about the history of noodles?

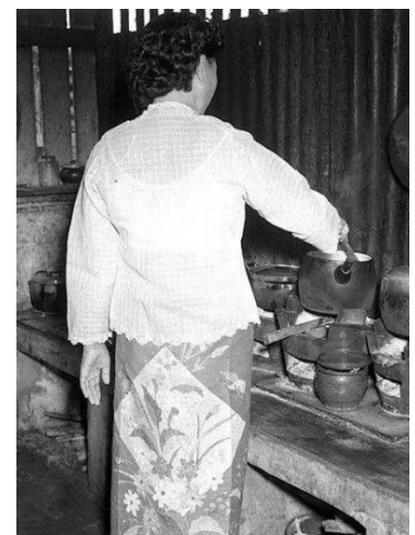
The earliest evidence of noodles was from 4000 years ago in China. In 2005, a group of archaeologists discovered an earthenware bowl containing 4000 years old noodles in Lajia archaeological site. Those noodles were reported to look like Lamian, a type of soft wheat flour Chinese noodle.

However, according to research by an author from Beijing, Jen Lin-Liu, who travelled to Rome to trace the origins of noodles, the earliest Chinese noodle is known as Mian pian, and is still widely eaten in northern China. Mian Pian is a kind of noodle that does not appear as strands of dough. But instead, it is shaped into little bits, formed from bread dough, and then thrown into a wok of boiling water.

Other recorded history about noodles in China has been recorded in a book from the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 CE). It is written in the book that noodles were prepared from wheat dough, and it was a popular dish among the Han dynasty's citizens.

HOW IT CAME TO MALAYSIA

In the 19th century, many Chinese were brought to Malaya by the British to work as labourers. As these Chinese immigrants settled in diverse parts of British Malaya and Borneo, they brought Chinese dishes and recipes, including noodles. These Chinese dishes and recipes are gradually infused with their new home characteristics in Malaysia while remaining distinctively Chinese. In addition, a spicy noodle dish named 'Laksa' is also famous among the Straits Chinese, also known as Peranakans. Besides that, the interaction between the Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other races in Malaysia has allowed cultural exchange to happen, which has also affected food culture.



Nyonya style of cooking noodles

RECIPE + TIPS & TRICKS



INGREDIENTS

- 300 grams high gluten flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 150 ml water

METHODS

1. Add the flour and salt to a mixing bowl with hook attachment.
2. On low speed, gradually add the water in and give the flour ample time to work it in.
3. Once it has come together, continue to mix for 10 minutes.
4. Take the dough out and cover it with an overturned bowl and let it rest for 30 minutes to allow gluten development
5. After that, knead it by hand to let air bubble escape and start portioning the dough into quarters.
6. Roll each quarter into a thin sheet over a floured surface and fold it over each other.
7. Start slicing the noodles and tossing it in flour to prevent sticking.
8. Throw the noodles in some boiling water, once it floats, its ready to serve! (p.s. this works great to use in Hakka Pan Mee)

TIPS & TRICKS

- Resist the temptation to add more water into the dough. Trust the process
- Don't be afraid to use a lot of flour during rolling and cutting, it gives more control.
- Fresh noodles will expand in boiling water so be mindful of the size and thickness of it.

VERSATILITY

Noodles are one of the most versatile food item out there. It is found in every culture and in different shapes and sizes, but all of them have about the same composition; starch and binding agent i.e., water and egg. Typically, noodles are made from wheat since it is widely available, but then again noodles are also a representation of the identity of a nation as the composition relies on what is native to the location which is why in Malaysia we have laksa made from rice flour, in China they have glass noodle made from mung bean flour, in Japan they uses shirataki made from konjac, and in Italy they made pasta from semolina. It goes without saying that noodles are a symbol of ever existing cultural diffusion and how mankind has a common ground with one another.

Types of noodles in Asia



FAMOUS NOODLE DISHES IN MALAYSIA

ASSAM LAKSA

A popular Malaysian street meal from Penang, Assam Laksa has a wonderful blend of spicy, sweet, salty, and umami ingredients. Regardless of the precise recipes used, the end product is always a rich, strong-flavored dish that has won the hearts of both locals and visitors. It's created with mackerel soup and the tamarind juice gives it a tart flavour.

PAN MEE

Pan Mee is a Hakka dish that made its way to Malaysia which is also known as Mee Hoon Kuih. It is commonly cooked at home as it is quick and easy to make. Hakka Pan Mee is a basic flour-based flat noodles topped with crispy fried anchovies, ground meat, shiitake mushrooms, and vegetables in an anchovy broth. A classic comfort food!

CHAR KUEY TEOW

The Malaysian version of pad thai, char kuey teow, is another Penang-born cuisine. In a wok, flat rice noodles are cooked with dark soy sauce over an open charcoal fire (for that special slightly charred taste). Cockles, prawns, chilli, eggs, bean sprouts, and chives are served alongside. These condiments are optional, and the noodles are always prepared to order, so make any specific requests you like.

MI GORENG MAMAK

Mi goreng simply means fried noodles and mamak refers to the Indian-Muslim community who is famous for opening up 24-hour neighbourhood eateries. Each food vendor has their unique recipe that they keep to themselves. Chicken, eggs, fish cakes, bean sprouts, and other vegetables are all found on a typical plate of mi goreng. Mi goreng mamak, on the other hand, is unique in that it includes potatoes and tofu.