

TASTING TABLE

License to Chill

This late-summer chilled ramen is the best of all worlds



There's nothing better than a steamy bowl of rich *tonkotsu* on a blustery day, but you shouldn't have to wait for fall to indulge a ramen craving.

That's where cold noodles come in. No, not leftovers, but purposefully cold or room-temperature noodles doused in a chilly broth.

"In Japan, cold ramen is a seasonal food, which is only offered in the summertime," Masaki Yamauchi, co-owner of [BeShock Ramen & Sake Bar](#) in San Diego, explains. The restaurant's summer special is a chilled riff on its spicy tan tan ramen, with a base of

chicken and fish broths, heavy cream, soy sauce, and sesame oil topped with seasoned ground pork. “It is a light and refreshing way to enjoy ramen dishes on a hot day.”

Though this particular dish hails from Japan, you'll find a huge variety of beloved brothy, cold noodle dishes all across Asia, from southwestern China all the way to Korea. And restaurants all over the U.S. are dishing out chilled bowls, too. So if you haven't dipped your spoon into this delicious subgenre yet, it's time to take note. Whether you're yearning for a chewy bite of udon or a silky slurp of a *kong-guksu*, there's no shortage of ways to get your noodle fix without sweating bullets.

Take this irresistible, late-summer ramen ([see the recipe](#)) with heirloom tomatoes, sautéed corn and spiralized squash in a chilled dashi stock. It brings together the best of the season's produce in a bowlful you can enjoy right this minute.



Just don't think of it as ramen placed in the fridge overnight (which would actually congeal and solidify). “The main difference between the cold and the hot dishes, aside from the soup temperature itself, is that cold ramen has less broth, because you don't drink the soup as you would with hot ramen,” Yamauchi explains. “The broth is meant instead for the food to soak, to marinate in flavor and to dip in while you eat.” (Of course, if you want to sip down the broth, we don't blame you.)

Cold ramen noodles also show up sans broth or stock in a popular Japanese summertime dish called *hiyashi chuka*. It's akin to a ramen salad with chilled noodles tossed in a vinegary soy dressing and topped with cucumber, tomato, meats, seafood and other garnishes. Washington, D.C.'s beloved ramen slinger, Katsuya

Fukushima, makes a version at his izakaya, [Daikaya](#), and also offers a chicken and chorizo cold ramen at [Bantam King](#).

Another popular Japanese dish for summer is soft and chewy udon served chilled in a cold dashi-based broth, which you can find at [Kagawa-Ya](#), a new noodle shop in Downtown San Francisco that specializes in Sanuki udon noodles (square-shaped noodles with flat edges). Chef Sean Lim serves them in a cold broth with soft-boiled egg, daikon, nori, green onions and daikon sprouts.

At the newly opened [Oodle Noodle](#) in Las Vegas, you can slurp creative dishes like Japanese-style shrimp mozzarella udon with seared salmon and avocado tartare *bukkake* udon. Over on the East Coast, Japanese udon chain [TsuruTonTan](#), which took over the former Union Square Cafe space in New York last year, offers several cold varieties, most notably its signature *mentaiko* caviar udon, where each chilled noodle is coated in little cod eggs, creating a salty pop of flavor with each bite.

Beyond the array of chilled ramen and udon options, *mul-naengmyeon*, that icy soup of long, thin noodles in beef broth and topped with a hard-boiled egg, is a common fixture in Korean restaurants. Find it at [Gangnam Korean BBQ](#) in Portland, Oregon, or on the opposite end of the country at [Sokongdong Tofu House](#) in Atlanta. Head to Los Angeles for a traditional take on the dish at [Ma Dang Gook Soo](#), which has been serving it for more than 20 years, or look east for a new take at NYC favorite [Her Name Is Han](#), which just started serving a new cold soup.

“Cold bean noodles—known as *kong-guksu*—are a traditional Korean dish in the summer,” Jinah Chang, director of food and beverage at the restaurant, explains. “Soy is rich in protein, so it’s very nutritious during the summer, especially since people sweat a lot.” Though traditional *kong-guksu* recipes call for yellow soybeans, Her Name Is Han makes a version with edamame, organic tofu, soy milk and peanuts.

East Village newcomer [Little Tong Noodle Shop](#) just added another crave-worthy cold noodle dish to the city's growing catalog. “All over China, we eat cold noodles, whether it is wheat, rice or noodles made from other grains and starch like green bean, soybean, or lotus root or sweet potatoes,” chef Simone Tong says. She relies on *mixian*, a rice noodle shaped like spaghetti, to create several different soups, like Laoya Duck Mixian, with a tea-infused roasted-duck bone broth that’s poured tableside. It’s topped with sliced duck, radishes, king oyster mushrooms, cucumber noodles, cured yolk shavings and fried scallions. Looking for a spicy kick? Try the Banna Shrimp Mixian, featuring a smoked tomato and shellfish broth, fresh shrimp, coconut mint sauce, pickled green chile, laksa oil and fried shallots.

Whatever you're craving, the bowlfuls are endless. But, sadly, summer is not, so get 'em while they're . . . still in season.