

# Sesame-Brown Butter Udon Noodles

By [Ali Slagle](#)

Time 15 minutes

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Joe Lingeman for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Cyd Raftus McDowell.

This weeknight meal is silky, slurpable and so quick to pull off. It follows the tradition of **wafu** or Japanese-style pasta, and combines brown butter, udon and spinach, but the classic combination of savory sauce, chewy noodle and green vegetable allows plenty of room for improvisation. Instead of soy sauce, you can add umami with Parmesan, miso, seaweed or mushrooms. Instead of black pepper for heat, grab ginger or chile flakes, oil or paste. For more protein, boil eggs or shelled edamame in the water before the udon, or add tinned mackerel or fresh yuba along with the sesame seeds. Udon noodles, found fresh, frozen or shelf-stable, are singularly bouncy and thick; if you can't find them, use the thinner, dried style that resembles linguine.

## INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

Salt

14 to 16 ounces udon, preferably thick fresh, frozen or shelf-stable noodles

## PREPARATION

### Step 1

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the noodles and cook according to package directions until just tender. Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then add the spinach and press to submerge. (It will

1 pound baby spinach or coarsely chopped or torn mature spinach

6 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper, plus more for serving

1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce, plus more as needed

Pinch of granulated sugar

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds, plus more for serving

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continue cooking later.) Drain the noodles and spinach, shaking to get rid of any excess water.

## Step 2

Set the pot over medium heat. Add 5 tablespoons butter and cook, stirring occasionally, until the foam subsides, the milk solids turn golden-brown and it smells nutty and toasty, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the black pepper and stir until fragrant. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pasta water, plus the noodles and spinach, soy sauce and sugar, and toss until the sauce is thickened and silky. Add pasta water, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the sauce clings to the noodles.

## Step 3

Remove from heat, add the sesame seeds and stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon butter until melted. Season to taste with more soy sauce and black pepper (if mild) and sugar (if too salty). Serve with more sesame seeds on top.

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