

Vegan Tantanmen With Pan-Fried Tofu

By [Hetty Lui McKinnon](#)



Linda Xiao for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Monica F

Total Time 45 minutes

Rating 4 ★★★★★ (2,809)

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Tantanmen is the Japanese version of dan dan noodle Sichuan dish of noodles and pork bathed in a spicy sesame broth. Chinese or Japanese sesame pastes, which are made from roasted sesame seeds and yield a more robust flavor than tahini, are traditionally used in this dish. (But tahini works too; it will produce a mellow creamier result.) For those who keep doubanjiang, or Chinese fermented bean paste, on hand, add a teaspoon or two to your soup base for even deeper flavor. Slices of pan-fried tofu make this dish feel more substantial but if you are looking for a shortcut, crumble it up and pan-fry it alongside the mushrooms. For non-vegans add a jammy egg.

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Yield: 4 servings

Kosher salt and black pepper

12 ounces dried ramen
noodles

3 to 4 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil

1 (12-ounce) package extra-
firm tofu, drained and sliced
crosswise, ¼-inch thick

8 large shiitake mushrooms
(about 8 ounces), trimmed and
thinly sliced

4 cups vegetable stock

1 (5-by-6-inch) piece dried
kombu (about ½ ounce),
optional

2 cups soy or oat milk, at room
temperature

½ cup Chinese or Japanese
sesame paste, or use tahini

¼ cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons sesame oil

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

2 tablespoons chile oil, plus
more for serving

1 cup frozen corn, defrosted
and drained, if needed

Step 1

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add noodles and cook until al dente, according to package instructions. Drain and run under cold water until the noodles are completely cold. (This stops the noodles from cooking further.) Set aside to drain.

Step 2

Heat a large skillet over medium-high. When hot, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and arrange the tofu slices in a single layer. Generously season the tofu with about ½ teaspoon salt and about ⅛ teaspoon pepper. Reduce heat to medium and cook tofu for 3 to 4 minutes until golden. Flip the tofu and cook until golden on the other side, about 2 to 3 minutes. (Depending on the size of your skillet, you may need to cook your tofu in two batches.) Remove from the pan, set aside on a plate.

Step 3

To the same pan, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and the mushrooms. Season with salt and pepper. Pan-fry until mushrooms are tender and slightly golden, about 6 minutes.

Step 4

Prepare the broth: Pour the vegetable stock into a large pot and add the kombu, if using.

Step 5

Bring to a gentle simmer and cook over medium heat, about 7 minutes. Remove kombu (keep for another use) and turn off heat. Allow to sit for 2 minutes, then gradually whisk in the milk, adding a little at a time, so it doesn't curdle. Once

4 scallions, finely chopped
1 tablespoon roasted sesame seeds

milk has been added, heat broth over medium ^{What would you like to cook?} until it simmers.

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[Nutritional Information](#)

Step 6

In a medium bowl, combine the sesame paste, soy sauce, sesame oil, rice vinegar, sugar and chile oil. Divide mix across four deep noodle bowls.

Step 7

Pour the hot broth over the sesame soup base, dividing evenly among the bowls. Whisk to combine the base with the broth.

Step 8

Divide the noodles across the bowls, and top each bowl with a few slices of tofu, mushrooms, corn, scallions, sesame seeds and an extra drop of chile oil.

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