

# Food Science for the Win

## Udon Noodle Soup

During the colder months of the year, there is nothing better than enjoying a warm comfort food like soup. With this recipe, we'll be exploring just how to get that rich umami flavor within a classic Japanese dish. *This recipe was adapted from Mastering the Art of Japanese Home Cooking by Masaharu Morimoto* <https://bit.ly/2NH6iYn>



### Udon Vocabulary!

- **Umami** It is one of the 5 basic flavors that is often described as savory. It is very balanced and the flavor usually lasts longer than other tastes. It can be found in many kinds of meats, soups, and fermented products.
- **Dashi** A soup stock that is the basis for many Japanese dishes. It is usually made up of dried bonito flakes and kombu (a kind of kelp). Dashi is responsible for that rich umami taste that many Japanese foods are known for.
- **Mirin** A kind of Japanese rice wine that is sweeter than most other rice wines. The alcohol content is also lower.
- **Usukuchi** A type of soy sauce that is lighter in color than regular soy sauce, but the flavor is usually a lot saltier. Not to be confused with "low-sodium soy sauce."
- **Tempura** A kind of Japanese dish that involves the frying of various kinds of foods. Shrimp is one of the most popular things to fry, but vegetables are often chosen as well.
- **Kamaboko** A kind of Japanese food that can also go by the name "fish cake." It is made up of a white fish paste that is often dyed pink or other colors depending on the food that it is being served with. It was originally used as a way for Japanese people to preserve some of their fish for later.

### Equipment

- **A wide, shallow pot**
- **Any kind of long spoon or stirring utensil**
- **A sharp knife**
- **Cutting board**

# Ingredients

(Serves 2)

- **1 sachet of instant dashi**
- **¼ cup mirin** Japanese rice cooking wine
- **¼ cup usukuchi** light-colored soy sauce
- **1 pound Udon noodles** fresh, frozen, or dry Japanese wheat noodles
- **⅛ pound boneless chicken thighs** cut into bite-sized pieces
- **4 ¼ inch-thick slices kamaboko** Japanese Fish Cake
- **2 fresh or dried shiitake mushroom caps**
- **2 cups loosely packed baby spinach**, dunked in boiling water then squeezed well
- **2 cups loosely packed stemmed shungiku (chrysanthemum greens), or more baby spinach**
- **1 scallion, whites and light green parts** chopped into 2 by ½-inch pieces
- **2 large eggs**
- **2 pieces cooked shrimp tempura** Optional
- **Shichimi togarashi** Japanese seven-spice powder

## Recipe

1. Combine the mirin, dashi, and soy sauce in the pot. Bring it to boil over high heat.
2. Add the udon noodles. Cook fresh noodles for 2 minutes, frozen noodles for 4 minutes. Stir occasionally until the noodles begin to separate from one another.
3. Add the chicken, fish cake, and mushrooms to the pot. Make sure to segregate the ingredients while they cook in the pot. If the soup begins to boil, reduce the heat to maintain a simmer. Turn chicken over once so that it cooks through, about 3 minutes.
4. Reduce the heat to medium or medium-low.
5. Add the spinach, shungiku (chrysanthemum greens), and scallions in their own cluster. Keep cooking this soup until the greens start to wilt, about 1 minute.
6. Gently crack and add eggs to the soup, taking care not to break the yolks. Put the lid on the pot and wait for the egg whites to set. Make sure that noodles are fully cooked but not mushy. This should take around 3 minutes.
7. Add the shrimp tempura. It should float to the surface. Serve the soup in individual bowls making sure to have at least one of each ingredient in it.
8. Add Shichimi togarashi to their soup for that extra spice if you enjoy that kind of thing.

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