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SPICY CUMIN LAMB BIANG BIANG NOODLES

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BY  **SARAH**  **132 COMMENTS**



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If this recipe for Spicy Cumin Lamb Biang Biang Noodles piqued your interest, you're probably in one of two camps:

1. The “Hm, this looks intriguing” camp: You saw the picture of the finished dish and thought, “Hm, this looks intriguing. Homemade noodles? With *cumin*? And lamb? Never heard of a Chinese dish like that, but I’d venture a guess that it would be pretty tasty.”

Or 2. The “OH-MY-GOSH-THEY-DID-IT-THEY-HAVE-A-SPICY-CUMIN-LAMB-NOODLE-RECIPE!!!-YAAAAASSSSSSSS” camp: You saw the picture of the finished dish and immediately recognized it as the magical, spicy, perfectly chewy concoction that you first tried either in Northern China or (more likely) New York City—at the wildly popular chain, [Xi’An Famous Foods](#).

Regardless of what camp you’re in, I’m REALLY excited to be sharing this recipe with you Woks of Lifers today, because I’ve been experimenting with it for a while, and I’m really proud of how it turned out. Judging by how quickly my dad wolfed down a plate of this stuff last weekend, I’d say it’s a real doozy.



If you aren’t familiar with biang biang noodles, here’s a quick overview:

Biang Biang noodles are a Northern Chinese specialty, hailing from Shaanxi Province. They are generally wide, thick, and chewy, and most importantly, hand-made, giving them a slightly uneven texture that clings to sauce really well.

Oh, and the word *biang* in the term *biang biang mian* (“biang biang noodles”) is kind of special. The Chinese character contains a whopping 58 strokes, making it one of most complex Chinese characters in contemporary usage (thanks Wikipedia!). The origins of the word are unclear, but people say it was invented to describe the sound made from the noodles getting slapped and stretched against a table, or perhaps the sound made when chewing them. I think the table theory is probably more likely.



The noodles are often combined with spicy chili oils and eaten in the wintertime. Having experienced a couple of Beijing winters myself, I can say that a bowl of spicy noodles can do wonders when it's biting cold outside.

This cumin lamb version incorporates influences from Xinjiang cuisine, in which lamb is a common protein and cumin is used to spice many different dishes. (We actually blogged about [a trip to Xi'An](#), where lots of the things we tried used the same cumin/chili mixture that flavors

this dish. Check it out [here](#). Come to think of it, we also blogged about going to Xi'An Famous Foods (or rather their fancier sit-down joint, *Biang*) in Flushing, NY. [Here's that Flushing NY food post.](#))

For those of you who have had the version at Xi'An Famous Foods and are maybe wondering how accurate or close this recipe is to their version, I have a few things to say on that:

1. I found this [Eater](#) article on how Xi'An Famous Foods prepares this dish to be invaluable to developing this recipe, and I made sure to include most (if not all) of the ingredients mentioned.
2. That said, my version is a bit more “homemade” in that it wasn't necessarily designed to be replicated over and over again for the tons of customers walking through the doors of their restaurants every day. As a result, I think this recipe is a bit more flavor-packed than the XFF version, because rather than getting a small scoop of the lamb mixture tossed in with your noodles, you're making a relatively large amount of sauce and then stir-frying the noodles directly in it.
3. If you've ever experienced the melancholy of getting takeout at XFF, only to find that the noodles are hopelessly soggy by the time you get home (XFF actually goes so far as to recommend NOT getting takeout), you'll be happy to know that this homemade version won't go soggy on you if you decide to keep and reheat leftovers. The key is kneading the dough long enough and making sure to let it rest sufficiently as well. I also don't hand-rip the noodles, like XFF does. I find that the hand-ripping method can make for thinner, sort of scraggly edges on the noodles, which can get soggy very quickly. If you like your noodles not-as-wide as these, I think cutting them lengthwise with a knife (while not totally traditional) is the better way to go.
4. I went a bit crazy with the chili oil when I cooked and photographed this recipe. I put in a couple tablespoons more than what my own recipe actually calls for, because, well...we like spicy food. Feel free to adjust the amount of chili oil you use for your own taste preferences. The color of the dish may change, but it'll still be awesome.

One more final note before we begin. Lamb shoulder isn't always easy to find in American grocery stores, but it's imperative to find a fattier cut of lamb like shoulder for this recipe. Leg of lamb or lamb shanks will not work.

Lamb shoulder chops are sometimes available, which is what I used here.

I've also used regular lamb chops (rib, not loin), which are always readily available. Is it worth slicing up a few lamb chops for this dish?

Uh. YES.

That said, it can be hard to get all the meat off a lamb chop without wasting any, so I would just cut the big main chunk of meat off to slice (against the grain!) for the noodles, and then I took the bones (which still had quite a bit of meat on them), and pan-fried them with a bit of salt for a kind of meat lollipop snack thing. I gotta tell you--we were fighting over those meat lollipop snack things. They were good.

I hope that doesn't sound weird to you, but I know I don't have to worry. Because the Woks of Life readership knows food. And ya'll are awesome.

Ok, let's get started!

Here's what you'll need.

For the biang biang noodles:

- 1 1/2 cups bread flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup, plus 1 tablespoon water

For the lamb & sauce:

- 8 oz. fatty lamb shoulder or chuck, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, plus 3 tablespoons (divided)
- 1 tablespoon **Shaoxing rice wine**, plus 2 tablespoons (divided)
- 1 teaspoon **cornstarch**
- 1 1/2 tablespoons **cumin seeds**
- 2 teaspoons **coriander seeds**
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground **white pepper**
- 1 tablespoon grated **ginger**
- 2 **scallions**, chopped (white parts and green parts separated)
- 7 cloves **garlic**, minced
- 1 **long hot red** or **green chili pepper**, de-seeded and thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons **chili oil**, preferably **homemade**
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon **black vinegar** or **rice vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon **soy sauce**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup finely diced **Chinese celery** or regular celery (optional)
- 3 cabbage leaves, roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup **garlic chives**, roughly chopped (optional)

First, make the noodle dough. In the bowl of a **stand mixer**, add the bread flour, salt and water. Combine the mixture with your hands or a fork until it starts to form a scraggly dough. NOTE: You can also use the mixer for this step, but I find it takes longer.

Once the dough has come together a bit, attach the bowl to the mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment, and turn it on low speed (setting “2” on a **KitchenAid**). Allow the mixer to knead the dough for 20 minutes.

Here’s what it looks like after 5 minutes:

After 10 minutes:

After 15 minutes:

By the end of the full 20 minutes, the dough will not stick to the sides of the bowl, will be smooth and elastic, and won't be too dry. I kneaded it a bit by hand to make it come fully

together:

You'll know the dough is done when you can rip off a piece of it and stretch it slowly by a couple inches without it breaking apart.

If the dough breaks, knead for another 3-5 minutes (to allow the dough to absorb more moisture). If it still won't stretch, try adding a tablespoon of water and kneading by hand to incorporate the water. Then transfer it to the mixer once again and allow the dough hook to do its work for another 5 minutes. You need to give the dough time to absorb the moisture uniformly.

If, on the other hand, your kitchen is humid and the dough is a bit sticky, sprinkle in some more flour and knead for another 3-5 minutes.

Once the dough has reached the right consistency, knead it by hand into a smooth ball, and cover it with plastic wrap or an overturned bowl (as long as the bowl is not touching the dough). Allow it to rest for 1 to 2 hours.

Now, get the rest of your ingredients ready. Combine the sliced lamb with 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon rice wine, and 1 teaspoon cornstarch. Set aside to marinate.

In a clean, dry pan over medium heat, add the cumin seeds, coriander seeds, and white pepper.

Toast the spices until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Coarsely grind the spices in a spice grinder or **mortar & pestle**. Set aside.

Prepare all your vegetables, and set those aside as well. You want to have all your ingredients chopped, minced, and ready to go before you turn on the stove.

Now you're ready to make the noodles. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and transfer the rested dough to a clean, oiled surface. Press the dough into a half-inch thick, relatively even rectangle about 10 inches in length.

Cut the rectangle into 10 equal strips.

Take each strip and lay flat on the counter. Use your palm to flatten the strip into a long, wide, flat noodle—don't worry about it being perfectly straight or even.

Now, the next step is how this noodle got its name. Pick up the noodle on both ends, lift it, and gently slap it repeatedly on the counter while stretching it out. You can also use your hands to flatten it out further so that the noodle has a relatively uniform thickness. The biang biang noodles should be about the thickness of spaghetti—if they are translucent at all, they're too thin.

Lay them onto your parchment-lined baking sheet, and repeat the process until you have all 10 noodles. If you run out of space on the parchment paper, just put another layer of parchment on top. You can keep the noodles this thick, or if you like thinner ones, you can slice each noodle in half lengthwise using a sharp knife. Cover the biang biang noodles with plastic wrap so they don't dry out.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. The noodles will take approximately 90 seconds to cook, so make sure you time it right so that they're cooked and drained around the same time that your sauce is done.

To make the sauce, heat 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a large wok over medium heat. Add the ginger and scallion whites and cook for 1 minute.

Add the garlic and chili pepper, and cook for another 30 seconds.

Crank up the heat to high and add the marinated lamb.

Stir-fry the lamb until just browned, and immediately add 2 tablespoons rice wine, along with your prepared spice mixture, the chili oil, sugar, vinegar, soy sauce, salt, onions, and celery (if using). If things are starting to stick to the bottom of the wok, add a ¼ cup or so of water to deglaze it.

While that's going, throw your noodles and the cabbage into boiling water, and cook for 90 seconds to 2 minutes.

Transfer the cooked biang biang noodles and cabbage to the wok along with the garlic chives (if using) and scallion greens, and toss until everything is completely coated in the sauce.

Serve your Spicy Cumin Lamb Biang Biang Noodles as a meal!

These noodles are just as good as the beloved Xi'An Famous Foods version, and if you find yourself far away from New York City with these noodles out of reach, you can now try your hand at making them yourself.

And again, while the noodles at Xi'An do tend to get soggy if they're left to sit around for any length of time, I found that these noodles stayed nice and chewy—even after refrigerating and reheating. Which means leftovers—if you have any, that is—are a go.

Spicy Cumin Lamb Biang Biang Noodles

Biang Biang noodles are a Northern Chinese specialty, hailing from Shaanxi Province. They are generally wide, thick, and chewy, and most importantly, hand-made, giving these biang biang noodles a slightly uneven texture that clings to that signature spicy cumin lamb sauce really well.

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time
3 hrs	10 mins	3 hrs 10 mins

Course: Noodles and Pasta Cuisine: Chinese

Keyword: biang biang noodles Servings: 4 Calories: 425kcal

Author: Sarah

Ingredients

For the noodles:

- 1 1/2 cups bread flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (plus 1 tablespoon water)

For the lamb & sauce:

- 8 oz. fatty lamb shoulder or chuck (225g, thinly sliced)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (plus 3 tablespoons, divided)
- 1 tablespoon **rice wine** (plus 2 tablespoons, divided)
- 1 teaspoon **cornstarch**
- 1 1/2 tablespoons **cumin seeds**
- 2 teaspoons **coriander seeds**
- 1/4 teaspoon **ground white pepper**
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 2 **scallions** (chopped, white parts and green parts separated)
- 7 cloves **garlic** (minced)
- 1 long hot red or green chili pepper (de-seeded and thinly sliced)
- 3 tablespoons **chili oil** (preferably homemade)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon black vinegar or rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon **soy sauce**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 small red onion (thinly sliced)
- 1/2 cup finely diced Chinese celery or regular celery (optional)
- 3 cabbage leaves (roughly chopped)
- 1/2 cup **garlic chives** (roughly chopped, optional)

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Instructions

1. First, make the noodle dough. In the bowl of a stand mixer, add the bread flour, salt and water. Combine the mixture with your hands or a fork until it starts to form a scraggly dough. Once the dough has come together a bit, attach the bowl to the mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment, and turn it on low speed (setting "2" on a KitchenAid). Allow the mixer to knead the dough for 20 minutes. By the end, the dough will have formed a ball that: doesn't stick to the sides of the bowl, is smooth and elastic, and isn't too dry.
2. You'll know the dough is done when you can rip off a piece of it and stretch it slowly by a couple inches without it breaking apart. If the dough breaks, knead for another 3-5 minutes (to allow the dough to absorb more moisture). If it still won't stretch, try adding a tablespoon of water and kneading by hand to incorporate the water. Then transfer it to the mixer once again and allow the

dough hook to do its work for another 5 minutes. You need to give the dough time to absorb the moisture uniformly.

3. If, on the other hand, your kitchen is humid and the dough is a bit sticky, sprinkle in some more flour and knead for another 3-5 minutes.
4. Once the dough has reached the right consistency, cover it with plastic wrap or an overturned bowl (as long as the bowl is not touching the dough) and allow it to rest for 1 to 2 hours.
5. Now, get the rest of your ingredients ready. Combine the sliced lamb with 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon rice wine, and 1 teaspoon cornstarch. Set aside to marinate.
6. In a clean, dry pan over medium heat, add the cumin seeds, coriander seeds, and white pepper. Toast the spices until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Coarsely grind the spices in a spice grinder or mortar & pestle. Set aside. Prepare all your vegetables, and set those aside as well.
7. Now you're ready to make the noodles. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and transfer the rested dough to a clean, oiled surface. Press the dough into a half-inch thick, relatively even rectangle about 10 inches in length. Cut the rectangle into 10 equal strips. Take each strip and lay flat on the counter. Use your palm to flatten the strip into a long, wide, flat noodle—don't worry about it being perfectly straight or even.
8. Now, the next step is how this noodle got its name. Pick up the noodle on both ends, lift it, and gently slap it repeatedly on the counter while stretching it out. You can also use your hands to flatten it out further so that the noodle has a relatively uniform thickness. The noodles should be about the thickness of spaghetti—if they are translucent at all, they're too thin. Lay them onto your parchment-lined baking sheet, and repeat the process until you have all 10 noodles. If you run out of space on the parchment paper, just put another layer of parchment on top. You can keep the noodles this thick, or if you like thinner ones, you can slice each noodle in half lengthwise using a sharp knife. Cover the noodles with plastic wrap so they don't dry out.
9. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. The noodles will take approximately 90 seconds to cook, so make sure you time it right so that they're cooked and drained around the same time that your sauce is done.
10. To make the sauce, heat 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a large wok over medium heat. Add the ginger and scallion whites and cook for 1 minute. Add the garlic and chili pepper, and cook for another 30 seconds. Crank up the heat to high and add the marinated lamb. Stir-fry the lamb until just browned, and immediately add 2 tablespoons rice wine, along with your prepared spice mixture, the chili oil, sugar, vinegar, soy sauce, salt, onions, and celery (if using). If things are starting to stick to the bottom of the wok, add a ¼ cup or so of water to deglaze it.
11. While that's going, throw your noodles and the cabbage into boiling water, and cook for 90 seconds to 2 minutes.
12. Transfer the cooked noodles and cabbage to the wok along with the garlic chives and scallion greens, and toss until everything is completely coated in the sauce.
13. Serve!

Nutrition

Calories: 425kcal | Carbohydrates: 45g | Protein: 19g | Fat: 19g | Saturated Fat: 6g | Cholesterol: 36mg | Sodium: 785mg | Potassium: 447mg | Fiber: 3g | Sugar: 4g | Vitamin A: 430IU | Vitamin C: 15.3mg | Calcium: 88mg | Iron: 3.6mg

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132 COMMENTS

Cheryl says

June 24, 2020 at 3:33 PM

I just bought a package of something called “Shangxi Planed Noodles”. Are they a commercial version of these? I know they couldn’t be as good as homemade (not doing it, I don’t have a machine with a dough hook) or even Xi’an Famous Foods, which I’ve never had because of the “no take out” issue, but if they are the right kind I’d like to try making a version of this.

[Reply](#)

Sarah says

June 25, 2020 at 1:41 PM

Hi Cheryl, you can definitely use those noodles to make this dish. Won't be quite the same as the homemade, but they'll still be good!

[Reply](#)

Cheryl says

June 26, 2020 at 1:31 PM

I know it couldn't possibly be as good as homemade, but I do love cumin lamb, so... One of these days when such things are allowed again, I'll sit myself down in Xian Famous Foods to try theirs. I've only ever had takeout dishes from there.

[Reply](#)

D says

June 19, 2020 at 10:27 PM

Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU so much!!!! One of three dishes I missed most from NYC was this dish from Xian Famous Foods. I followed your recipe exactly and it tasted exactly the same, if not better!! The best food I've ever prepared, so thank you so much!!!

[Reply](#)

Sarah says

June 22, 2020 at 3:31 PM

Wow such high praise. I'm honored! You're welcome!!

[Reply](#)

Michael says

June 3, 2020 at 7:48 PM

★★★★★

I love this dish at xi'an. Thank you so much for posting your recipe. I haven't even made it yet but I'm excited to try: to me the most challenging part will be getting the texture and quality of the noodles right (I do not usually make this)

[Reply](#)

Sarah says

June 4, 2020 at 12:02 PM

We hope you enjoy the outcome of this dish just as much as Xi'An's!

[Reply](#)

KT says

June 2, 2020 at 7:17 PM

What ingredients should I eliminate to make it non-spicy. Thanks for this recipe!

[Reply](#)

Sarah says

June 3, 2020 at 11:14 AM

You can replace the long hot pepper with bell pepper and then reduce the amount of chili oil or omit it entirely.

Reply

Ammon says

May 13, 2020 at 11:09 PM

★★★★★

my life is now complete and I can die in peace

Reply

Sarah says

May 14, 2020 at 2:15 PM

Hahaha, self actualization is very high praise, Ammon!

Reply

Katie says

May 12, 2020 at 8:34 AM

★★★★★

Okay, first of all, Thank. You. So. Much. This was great!

Second of all Xi'an Famous Foods is now selling their chili oil!!!! Life gives us little victories.

This fact does not make your recipe obsolete, oh contraire! I followed all the other flavors and it was magic!

Variations I did:

Impossible Burger: (<https://impossiblefoods.com/>) We made this a vegan dish to accommodate

our diet. We haven't used this meat replacement product very often as it is a little pricey, it did not brown to our liking, but the texture and flavor were great.

Store-bought noodles: Sad, I know, but bread flour is hard (impossible) to find due to Pandemic, and I was short on time. So I used store-bought noodles, but honestly, it was great but I know it could be so much better! So next time (next week?) I will be hunting some down, trying this recipe again, and planning ahead for more time to include kneading and resting. TLDR: short on time, still delicious.

Thank you! I have shared this recipe with my family and friends!

Reply

Sarah says

May 12, 2020 at 11:00 AM

You're welcome, Katie! Thank you for sharing our recipe with others, and so glad you enjoyed it!

Reply

Kat says

May 1, 2020 at 10:20 AM

So excited to make this — Xi'An Famous Foods is one of my favorite spots in NYC. Is it worth making this dish with a different protein? Lamb is hard to find for us in pandemic times.

If yes—what protein would you recommend? Stay safe!

Reply

Sarah says

May 1, 2020 at 10:53 AM

Hi Kat, you could try beef! I would do sliced flank steak.

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