

Take a pot short

Who says noodles are boring?

One pot dishes are quick tummy pleasers. With one pot cooking, you can cater to one or many just by varying the amount of ingredients.

Our featured dish today is a noodle casserole that's convenient, healthy and shouldn't take you more than a quarter of an hour to prepare.

Its main ingredient is one of the best-selling foods in Singapore – instant noodles.

I reckon if ever I wrote a cookbook, it will be called *One Hundred and One Ways to Prepare Instant Noodles*. I grew up with Maggi Mee. It was an after-school treat, usually topped with a fried egg, and got me to the lunch table quicker than a three-course meal.

I suspect it's still a widely practiced formula for a new generation of school kids.

Even when I was away in college, my monthly care package from home was a 12-pack of chicken essence... and a carton of

instant noodles. Believe me, those noodles were better received, and more carefully rationed.

They were cooked in a vast variety of ways, most of which were savoury but a few of which were actually dessert!

(We simply crisp fried left-over noodles in butter and poured maple syrup over. It was an invention by my very hungry and often very poor flatmates.)

My collection of instant noodle recipes has since grown more sophisticated, because they remain my favourite fast food.

I'm pairing the noodles this time with chicken and mushroom, universal favourites in their own right.

I assure you, we almost had a food fight in the test kitchen when they tussled for that pot.

If you would like to know more about a cooking method or a recipe you want to try, write in to homechef@newstoday.com.sg.

If you have a question about Maggi's products, please write to their home economist at nancy@sg.nestle.com.



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Recipes

Pot Shorts - Chicken Mushroom Noodles

(See photo top right)

Ingredients:

4 packets MAGGI Instant Noodles – Chicken
Dried shiitake mushroom slices.
1 packet chicken breast fillets
2 cloves garlic, minced
Cornflour

Method:

Clean and slice chicken breasts against the grain. Open two packets of seasoning from the noodles, and mix it with the chicken, together with a little cornflour. Set aside.

(Tip: If you like your meat well-seasoned, marinate the meat and mushrooms in a ziplock bag before you go to work.)

In a saucepan, add a little oil and the minced garlic. When it starts turning colour, quickly add the chicken slices and brown lightly over high heat. Add the sliced mushrooms and about two cups water. Leave to simmer while you prepare noodles.



Softened noodles with hot water. Drain and place servings in individual casseroles. The soup should be reduced to a thick broth by now. Carefully ladle soup over noodles. Serve.

(Tip: The heat from the boiling soup will further soften the noodles as they go from stovetop to dinner table. Over-cooking the noodles will simply make them soggy.)

(Total cooking time: 15 minutes)

Grocery List/Price Guide:

MAGGI Instant Noodles – Chicken (\$1.50/pkt of 6)
Chicken breast fillets (\$1.85)
Dried mushroom slices (\$1.00 @ \$5.20/200gm) Total: \$4.35

FUNFOODFACTS

MUSHROOM MAGIC

There was a time when wizened black Chinese mushrooms were a regular on festive tables. You didn't eat them every day. But with local mushroom farms in production, we are getting them fresh on the supermarket shelves. Only they are now known by the more elegant name of shiitake (shee-ee-tah-kay). Fresh shiitake, in the right season, are just a couple of dollars for a large packet, good for a quick stir fry or steam-boat.

Taste-wise, I find flavour intensifies during the drying process, just as straw mushrooms fresh or canned are never as sweet as the dried.

I have since also discovered dried shiitake slices in packets. Use them a handful at a time. Because they are ready sliced, you don't even have to soak them. Toss them straight into the soup or stew after a quick rinse.

LONG SOUP, SHORT SOUP

Ever eaten in a Chinatown restaurant abroad? You've probably puzzled over what long soup and short soup were on the menu. Easy. The explanation is pretty graphic. Long soup is wantan soup with long noodles. Short soup is an abbreviated version, minus the long noodles. I have this on the best authority – namely, my favourite Chinese takeaway in San Francisco. :P

