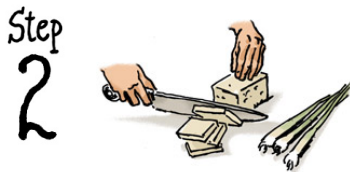


You will need: a colander or strainer, a blender, a pound of cooked buckwheat or wheat noodles, vegetable oil, a pound of firm tofu, two scallions, one peeled garlic clove, four heaping spoonfuls of peanut butter (any kind), three spoonfuls of soy sauce, a handful of cilantro, the juice of one lime, a spoonful of sugar, a spoonful of sesame oil, a spoonful of fresh ginger (peeled and chopped), one jalapeño (chopped; remove the seeds if you want less heat), a spoonful of fish sauce (optional)



Rinse the cooked noodles with cold running water, drain, and toss with a drizzle of vegetable oil.



Slice the tofu into 1/4-inch-thick strips and **chop the scallions** (both the white and green parts). Set aside.



Place the remaining ingredients in the blender. **Blend** until smooth.



Add a little hot water to the blender until the mixture reaches a saucy consistency. **Scrape down the sides** with a rubber spatula or spoon.



To serve, place the noodles on a plate and top with the tofu, peanut sauce, and scallions.

*From the store to the kitchen to the table: We outline the steps that get you from raw ingredients to your dinner tonight, free of measurements and complicated techniques. It's a method you'll remember and whip out whenever you like. It is the most basic way to make the thing you're making.

Illustrations by Bill Russell. Find this online at www.chow.com/stories/11699.