

BLT Cold Ramen with ‘Kilt’ Lettuce

Serves 4-6 | 30 minutes prep + 5 minutes cook time (plus bacon cooking time)

Usually shredded egg, ham, and cucumber top hyashi chuka, chilled ramen noodles meant for hot weather eating. The name, literally “chilled Chinese,” nods to the noodles’ origins. While its noodles crossed over from China, some ramen preparations can be squeezed into the yoshoku tradition of western foods adapted to Japanese palates.

Our completely inauthentic cross cultural mashup is inspired by our friend Lola Mulholland. Over the Northwest’s long, hot summer, the Instagram feed from the creative whirlwind behind Portland-made Umi Organic ramen featured a tempting series of cold noodles topped with things like sardines, kimchi, and chili oil. Our gardens full of tomatoes already had us thinking BLT. Cold ramen with bacon, lettuce, and tomatoes seemed obvious.

An added benefit of cooking bacon is the leftover fat. Killed or wilted lettuce, sometimes called ‘kilt’ in the regional dialects of Appalachia, has historically meant a mix of hot bacon fat, vinegar, and sugar poured over foraged greens. The dish likely originated in pork-loving northern Europe, and the German immigrants scattered across Appalachia brought their favorite foods. The tangy, barely cooked greens feel right at home in a bowl of cold, chewy ramen with juicy ripe tomatoes and smoky, crisp bacon.

1 package Umi Organic ramen noodles

12 oz bacon

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

1/2 head (about 3 cups) iceberg lettuce, shredded

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoon Katz apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

3 tablespoons white tamari

3 tablespoons rice vinegar

1 teaspoon sesame oil

1 tablespoon Okinawan sugar

Kewpie mayo, flor de sal, furikake or shichimi to serve

Step 1 Mix together the tamari, rice vinegar, sesame oil, and Okinawan sugar.

Step 2 Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add the noodles, and cook for 2 minutes.

Step 3 Drain, rinse with cold water, and drain again. Add the tamari dressing and toss. Chill the noodles in the refrigerator while you cook the bacon.

Step 4 Cook the bacon to your desired degree of crispness, remove from the pan, and save the bacon fat (you should always save the bacon fat!).

Step 5 Heat 2 tablespoons of the bacon fat, the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, and sugar until just boiling. Put the shredded lettuce in a bowl and pour the hot dressing over it.

Step 6 Divide the cold ramen among 4-6 bowls. Top each bowl with a couple of slices of bacon, a handful of split cherry tomatoes, and some of the lettuce. Squirt a few squiggles of Kewpie mayo over the top, and sprinkle on a few pinches of furikake or shichimi if desired.