

PREP TIME: 20 Minutes

COOK TIME: 3 Hours (Low) / 1.5 Hours (High)

CRISPING TIME: 10 Minutes

TOTAL TIME: 3 Hours 30 Minutes

INTENSITY LEVEL: Moderate (Knife skills required, but cooking is hands-off)

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Introduction

Drunken Noodles, or *Pad Kee Mao*, is a legendary Thai street food dish known for its fiery heat, aromatic basil, and savory-sweet sauce. Traditionally, it is made in a screaming hot wok, requiring the cook to toss noodles at lightning speed to get that coveted “wok hei” (breath of the wok).

This recipe takes that high-stress, high-heat technique and flips it on its head. By using a slow cooker, we infuse the chicken and sauce with deep, layered flavors over hours rather

than minutes. However, we don't sacrifice texture. The "Crispy" in the name comes from a final, crucial step where we pan-fry the noodles to give them that restaurant-quality char and crunch. This is the perfect weeknight dinner for those who want authentic flavor without the takeout price tag.

Ingredients

For the Sauce

- ½ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- ¼ cup dark soy sauce (for color)
- 3 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon Sriracha (adjust to preference)
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic

- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger

For the Crock Pot

- 1.5 lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced into thin strips
- 1 yellow onion, sliced into thin strips
- 1 cup Thai basil leaves (plus more for garnish)
- 1-2 Thai bird chilies, minced (optional, for heat)

For the Noodles & Crisping

- 1 lb wide flat rice noodles (Pad Thai style)
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil (for frying)
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves

- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
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Instructions

Phase 1: The Marinade & Slow Cook (Intensity: Low)

1. Prepare the Sauce:

In a medium bowl, whisk together the low-sodium soy sauce, dark soy sauce, oyster sauce, fish sauce, brown sugar, Sriracha, and sesame oil. Stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved. Set aside.

2. Assemble the Crock Pot:

Place the sliced chicken thighs, red bell pepper, and onion into the basin of your slow cooker. Pour the prepared sauce mixture over the top. Add the minced garlic, grated ginger, and Thai chilies (if using). Toss everything with a spoon to ensure the chicken is coated.

3. Slow Cook:

Cover the crock pot and cook on LOW for 3 hours or HIGH for 1.5 hours. The chicken should be cooked through and tender, but not falling apart. (Note: If your crock pot runs hot, check at the 2.5-hour mark on low).

4. Add the Basil:

Once the cooking time is up, remove the lid and stir in the 1 cup of Thai basil leaves. Turn the slow cooker to “Warm” or off. The residual heat will wilt the basil perfectly.

Phase 2: Noodle Preparation (Intensity: Medium)

5. Soak the Noodles:

While the chicken finishes cooking, prepare your rice noodles. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, then remove it from the heat. Add the dry rice noodles and let them soak for 5–7

minutes until they are pliable but still slightly firm (al dente). Do not overcook. Drain them immediately and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process. Toss with a teaspoon of oil to prevent sticking.

Phase 3: The “Crispy” Finish (Intensity: High)

This is the most important step. Do not skip this. This separates “soggy slow cooker noodles” from “Crispy Crock Pot Drunken Noodles.”

6. Heat the Skillet:

Place a large wok or heavy-bottomed skillet over High Heat. Add 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil. You want the oil shimmering but not smoking.

7. Scramble the Eggs:

Pour the beaten eggs into the hot skillet. Quickly scramble them until they are just set. Push the eggs to one side of the pan.

8. Crisp the Noodles:

Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil to the empty side of the pan. Add the drained noodles. Spread them out into a single layer. Let them sit undisturbed for 2 minutes. This allows the bottom layer to char and crisp up. Flip the noodles in sections and let them crisp on the other side for another 2 minutes.

9. Combine:

Add the contents of the crock pot (chicken and sauce) to the skillet with the noodles. Add the cherry tomatoes and the remaining fresh basil. Toss everything together vigorously for 1-2 minutes. The sauce will thicken slightly and coat the noodles. If the pan is too dry, add a splash of water or broth.

10. Serve:

Serve immediately while hot. Garnish with extra Thai basil and a squeeze of lime if desired.

Recipe Notes

- **The Noodle Soak:** Rice noodles are tricky. If you soak them too long, they turn to mush in the skillet. Err on the side of under-soaking. The hot sauce from the crock pot will finish cooking them.
- **Dark Soy Sauce:** This is distinct from regular soy sauce. It is thicker and darker, providing the signature color of Drunken Noodles. If you don't have it, you can substitute regular soy sauce, but the color will be lighter.
- **Protein Swaps:** Ground chicken, pork, or firm tofu work great in place of chicken thighs. If using tofu, press it well before adding.
- **Heat Level:** The Sriracha and Thai chilies provide the heat. Taste the sauce before pouring it over the chicken. Remember that slow cooking mutes spice slightly, so you may want to add extra Sriracha at the end if you like it spicy.

Nutrition Information

Disclaimer: Nutritional information is an estimate and will vary based on specific ingredients and brands used. This calculation is based on 4 generous servings.

- **Calories:** 610 kcal

- Total Fat: 18g
- Saturated Fat: 4g
- Cholesterol: 185mg
- Sodium: 2100mg (Note: This is high due to the soy sauce and fish sauce. Use low-sodium soy sauce to reduce.)
- Total Carbohydrates: 75g
- Dietary Fiber: 4g
- Sugars: 14g
- Protein: 38g
- Vitamin C: 45% DV
- Iron: 20% DV
- Calcium: 8% DV