

# Liang ban fen-si

## (Long-life silk-glass noodles with pork, ginger, chilli and coriander)

A CHINESE NEW YEAR RECIPE FROM 'MUSIC, FOOD AND LOVE' BY GUO YUE AND CLARE FARROW

This is the symbolic starter that represents long life and good fortune, with its combination of light, tingling, exquisite tastes. The noodles – which are called glass noodles in China because of their brittle transparent beauty – are in fact mung-bean or green-bean threads. You can cut them, or preferably keep their superstitious length, and simply stand up to serve them like strands of transparent silk!

### INGREDIENTS:

- 200g (8 oz) fen-si (glass noodles, or 'bean thread')  
– you can buy these from a Chinese shop
- Sunflower oil
- Half of a cucumber, peeled and cut in half lengthwise, then finely sliced lengthwise into very thin strips
- 6 very thin slices of peeled ginger, finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled, crushed and finely chopped
- 3 spring onions, washed and finely chopped
- 125g (4½ oz) pork, preferably organic, cut very, very finely, ideally by hand, or minced, and then tossed in a little cornflour
- Chinese dark rice vinegar (I suggest Chinkiang vinegar)
- Light soy sauce
- Sea salt
- Sichuan peppercorns (the reddish brown dried berries of the prickly ash tree, often used in Chinese cooking)
- Sesame seed oil
- 1 small, fresh red chilli, cut in half across the centre and then in half lengthwise, then cut diagonally into small strips (optional)
- Fresh coriander, finely chopped (optional)

### METHOD:

First, boil the glass noodles for 3–4 minutes until they are soft and silky. Keep stirring them with chopsticks while they are boiling, so that they don't stick together. Drain them using a colander and put into a serving dish. Add 2 tablespoons of sunflower oil and mix well into the noodles so that they develop a silvery sheen. Before you start you can cut them shorter with scissors if you like, to make them more manageable – but since they are a symbol of long life I like to keep mine as long as possible! Lay the very fine strips of cucumber onto the noodles.

Now prepare the pork. Heat the wok on a medium-high heat until hot, and add 2 tablespoons of sunflower oil. Allow the oil to get hot, but not so hot that it's smoking. First, add your ginger, garlic and spring onion; there should be a good percussive sound. After a minute, add the pork, stirring all the time. After another minute, add ½ tablespoon of light soy sauce, stirring constantly until, after a further 1–2 minutes, the pork has browned and become slightly crispy. Add it to the noodles and cucumber in your dish. Then add the following: 1½ tablespoons of Chinese dark rice vinegar, 2 tablespoons of light soy sauce and 1 teaspoon of sea salt. Mix thoroughly together.

Now, using a little saucepan, turn your heat to high and heat the pan until it is hot. Add 2½ tablespoons of sunflower oil and heat until it is smoking a little. Put in ½ teaspoon of the reddish brown Sichuan pepper, and your fresh red chilli (optional), cut into small diagonal strips. In just over a minute the peppercorns should have turned a brown-black colour and gone crispy, while the red chilli will have become singed around the edges. Immediately pour the oil, chilli and pepper over the dish – there should be a loud sound like a clash of cymbals. Drizzle a very little sesame seed oil over the whole dish and, if you have a handful of fresh coriander, chop it finely and place on the top. Mellow in appearance, this dish tastes absolutely delicious!



### Little Leap Forward

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*This recipe is an adaption of the Liang Ban Fen-si recipe*

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