



# Instant and nutritional

## Brothers start healthy ramen company

**A**mong the staples of college life, none better represents the rite of passage than pizza and ramen. Beyond convenience, the degree of lasting importance of those go-to wonders is subjective, but neither qualifies to be on the

by  
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healthy diet spectrum.

It wasn't long ago that twin brothers Tim and Tom Zhang, now 28, knew college living and its eating pitfalls. Tim earned a managerial economics degree from UC Davis, attended culinary school and cooked in a Michelin-star restaurant. Tom has a degree in clinical nutrition, also from Davis. The pair have combined their past experiences and subsequent expertise to make something better for future generations to eat: healthy instant ramen.

As much as "healthy instant" might seem like an oxymoron, the brothers have transformed easy-to-prepare noodles into a meal that is actually good for you. Their Vite Ramen is a redesigned "nutritionally complete" version of the instant staple that boasts "high protein content with complete amino acids, a balanced macro-nutrient profile and 25 percent recommended daily value of all vitamins and minerals you need."

"We have had a lot of reaction, some that surprised us," said Tim, who lives in Davis. "People are telling us that Vite Ramen is a complete meal, but we've also had customers who are diabetics and comment they don't have insulin spikes. Others say they don't have post-meal fatigue."

It started with hundreds of hours of experiments in the Zhangs' apartment in 2017. A Kickstarter campaign the next year resulted in about 4,300 backers pledging nearly \$250,000. The fundraising goal was \$10,000.

A 4.5 ounce packet of Vite Ramen (soy sauce chicken flavor) has 30 grams of protein, 70 grams of carbohydrates, 7 grams of dietary fiber, 2 grams of sugar, 1.3 grams of saturated fat, 14 milligrams of cholesterol, 575 milligrams of sodium, and 500 calories. Each packet also has at least 25 percent of daily requirements for 27 vitamins and minerals.

The calories and carbs are about the same as your average grocery store ramen. For comparison, Top Ramen brand's chicken flavor variety has 520 calories for the same 4.5 ounce serving, and 79 grams of carbs compared with 70. Vite Ramen wins out, though, with drastically less sodium (575 versus 2,400 milligrams) and saturated fat (1.3 versus 10 grams), and more

than twice as much protein (30 versus 14 grams). And other than iron and tiny bit of potassium, Top Ramen comes up empty compared with Vite Ramen's added macronutrients.

Vite Ramen's flavor comes from various dehydrated broths, yeast extract, mushroom powders and extracts, dried vegetables and various spices and aromatics. The noodles are a blend of wheat flour, wheat gluten and quinoa flour and include high protein polyunsaturated fatty acids and fiber to balance out the carbs.

While most store-bought ramen is salt-dominant, Vite Ramen has a more neutral flavor and a grittier texture. The ingredients in the flavor/"nootrient" packet need rigorous stirring into the hot water and noodles. But the flavors are lasting (and are helped along with a little added salt or soy sauce).

Vite Ramen is available at viteramen.com, and comes in vegan miso, garlic pork and soy sauce chicken flavors in six (\$25.50) and nine (\$33.95) packs. Specials are regularly offered, and there are discounts for students, military personnel, first responders and when signing up for monthly ramen subscriptions. But buyer beware—shipping can take up to two weeks, as the demand for Vite Ramen is already overwhelming. □

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