

Chinese dumpling (Jiaozi) 饺子



In China, dumpling (jiaozi) is a traditional food. Chinese people are deeply attached to it. There are several key words associated with dumplings: wealth, family union, festivals (happiness and celebration), and delicacy. The shape of the Chinese dumpling is like gold and silver ingots, which were currencies in ancient China. People made them in such shapes to show their wish to gain wealth.

Making dumplings is teamwork, and usually, the team refers to a family. So, there is nothing better to enhance family connection than making dumplings while chatting and laughing together with all the family members. Many Chinese learn to make dumplings at a very young age and enjoy the fun of being a member of the dumpling-making team.

In a word, dumplings symbolize good luck and the promise of a bright and prosperous year ahead. Making dumplings and eating dumplings are the most important activities of Spring Festival.

Here is a recipe for making dumplings. Give it a try and enjoy making it.

Yield 4 dozen dumplings.

Ingredients

Dough for wrappers:

- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold water (room temperature)

Note: if you don't want to make dough, you can buy readymade dumpling wrappers from an Asian grocery store.

Filling:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound Chinese cabbage (celery cabbage or bok choy)
- 1 pound ground pork (not too lean)
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped, peeled fresh ginger root
- 1 table spoon Chinese rice wine, or pale dry sherry
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sesame-seed oil
- 2 tablespoons oil (peanut oil, or vegetable oil)
- 1 egg

Dumpling sauce:

- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon chili oil (optional)
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sesame oil

Prepare ahead:

Filling directions:

1. With a cleaver knife, trim the wilted leaves and root ends from the cabbage, and separate the cabbage into stalks. Wash the stalks under cold running water, drain and chop them very fine. Then place the chopped cabbage in a bowl and put a pinch of salt, set for a few minutes, and squeeze it firmly to extract as much of its moisture as possible.

2. In a large bowl, combine wine, soy sauce, the ground pork, chopped ginger root, sesame-seed oil, an egg, oyster sauce, a tablespoon oil, stir well. Add the chopped cabbages, stir in one direction and add water little by little and stir until the filling come together and get moisture.

Dough directions:

1. Sift the flour into a mixing bowl and, pour water gradually, little by little, stir well after adding little water, you will see a lot of small cotton dough, mixing until a stiff dough is formed. Knead the dough in the bowl for 5 minutes, or until it is smooth, then cover the bowl with a dampened cloth and let the dough rest for at least 30 minutes.
2. Turn the dough out on a lightly floured surface and knead it for another 2 or 3 minutes. Divide the dough into two parts, and, with your hands, firmly shape each piece into a sausage like cylinder about 12 inches long and one inch in diameter.
3. With a cleaver knife, cut the rolls of dough crosswise into ½-inch slices. Lay the slices on a lightly floured surface and sprinkle their tops with a light dusting of flour. One at a time, press the slices with the palm of your hand to flatten them to about ¼ inch thickness. Then roll each slice with a rolling pin into a 3-inch-round shape about 1/8 inch thick, turning it an inch or so in a clockwise direction as you roll so that the circle keeps its shape. Arrange the rounds side by side on a lightly floured tray or cookie sheet. Cover with a dry kitchen towel.

Dumpling sauce directions: Start by dissolving a teaspoon of sugar into a tablespoon of water. Then add 2 tablespoons soy sauce, 1 teaspoon rice vinegar, 1 teaspoon chili oil (optional) 1 teaspoon minced garlic and ½ teaspoon sesame oil. Stir to combine and serve the sauce with dumpling.

Assemble: For each dumpling, place 2 teaspoonfuls of the filling in the center of a round of dough and shape the filling into a strip about 1 ½ inches long. Fold the round in half to make a half-moon shape and pinch the edges together at the center of the arc. With your fingers, make two or three small pleats in one side of the opening at each end of the arc to gather the dough around the filling. Pinch all along the top of the arc to gather the dough around the filling. Pinch all along the top of the dumpling to seal pleated and smooth edges together. Transfer the finished dumpling to the floured tray or cookie sheet and keep it covered with the dry towel while you proceed with the rest.

Boil or Fry

Boiling directions: In a 4 to 5 quart pot, bring 2 quarts of water to a bubbling boil. Drop in the dumplings one by one and turn them about in the water once with chopsticks or a large slotted spoon to prevent their sticking together. Cover the pot and cook over high heat only until the water comes to a boil. Immediately pour in 1 cup of cold water, re-cover the pot and bring the water in it to a boil again. Repeat this process twice more, adding 1 cup of cold water each time. Then remove the dumplings from the water with a bamboo strainer or slotted spoon.

Arrange the boiled dumplings on a heated platter and serve them at once. Serve the dumpling sauce separately as a dip or sauce for the dumplings.

Frying directions: Set a 12-inch skillet over high heat for 30 seconds. Pour in 2 tablespoons of oil and swirl it about in the pan. Place the dumplings, sides just touching, pleated side up, in the pan. Cook over low heat for 2 minutes, or until the bottoms brown lightly. Add 1 cup of water, cover the pan tightly and cook over moderate heat for about 10 minutes, or until all the liquid has evaporated. Add the 1 tablespoon of oil and gently swirl it about in the skillet. Let the dumplings fry uncovered for 2 minutes longer. With a spatula or large spoon, gently loosen the dumplings from the bottom of the skillet and transfer them browned side up to a heated platter.