

Chinese Dumplings – Jiaozi

Dumplings, called “jiaozi” (jee-OUTsa), are popular in China year round, but especially during Chinese New Year. Not only are they warm and filling on cold winter days, but also they are popular because the oblong shape resembles that of ancient Chinese gold ingots.



Ingredients

Dough:

- 3 cups flour
 - 1-1/4 cups cold water
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
- (Note: Some grocery stores sell pre-made “JiaoZi Pi” dumpling skins.)

Dipping sauce (optional):

- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons fragrant brown vinegar (available at Asian grocery stores, often labeled as Zhenjiang vinegar)
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic

Filling:

- 1 lb. ground beef or pork
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon cooking sherry
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper (white pepper, black pepper or both)
- 3 tablespoons sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh ginger, finely minced or grated
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and finely minced
- 3-4 stalks of spring onion, finely minced
- 1 cup cabbage, finely minced, water squeezed out

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Preparation

Step One – Make the dough

Stir the salt into the flour. Slowly add the cold water. Knead the dough into a smooth ball. Do not add more water than necessary, as stiffer dough is easier to fill. Set aside the dough for about half an hour.

Step Two – Prepare the meat

In a mixing bowl, add meat, soy sauce, cooking sherry, salt, pepper and sesame oil. Mix together,

stirring in only one direction so that the meat fibers will stick together better, resulting in a dumpling that is less likely to fall apart.

Stir in the ginger, garlic, onion and cabbage that have been finely chopped, preferably in a food processor. Make sure that the water has been squeezed out of the cabbage or the meat mixture may become too moist and not stick together as it should.

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Step Three – Roll out the dough

Knead the dough, then roll it between the palms of your hands into several long pieces that resemble thin sausages. Cut the dough into about 60 one-inch pieces. Using a floured surface and a rolling pin, roll out each piece of dough into a 3-inch diameter circle. Roll the dough thin to avoid doughy dumplings.

Step Four – Fill the dough

Place a small round portion of the meat mixture – about equal to the size of a large grape – in the middle of the dough. Pull the two sides together and pinch it together in the middle. Then pinch together each side with your fingers until the dough is completely sealed. If the dumplings are not sealed, they will fall apart during the cooking process.

Place the filled dumplings on a floured surface, side-by-side. Do not stack them on top of each other or let them touch each other, as they will become stuck to each other.

Step Five – Boil the dumplings

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Add the dumplings to the boiling water, stirring for the first minute so they don't stick together. Continue cooking for about five minutes, adjusting the heat as necessary to prevent the water from boiling over. The dumplings are cooked when they look puffy and balloon-like. Avoid overcooking.

Remove the dumplings from the pot of water with a slotted spoon and place directly onto large plates or into individual serving bowls.

Step Six – Enjoy!

To make the dipping sauce, combine the ingredients in a small bowl and serve with the piping hot dumplings. Leftover dumplings can be pan-fried.

Serves 4-6 persons.

It takes time to master the skill of making dumplings, so if your first experience is not a success, keep working at it!

Substitutions:

You may want to substitute other finely minced ingredients in your dumplings in place of the cabbage. Suggestions include cilantro, chives, celery, carrots, shiitake mushrooms, fried eggs and green beans. There are no limits to what can be put inside the dumplings, so experiment and find a combination that suits your own tastes.

Cultural Note:

In the days when Chinese people cooked over open fires and could not adjust the flames, they poured a small rice bowl full of cold water into the boiling water as soon as the dumplings came to a boil, then let them come to a boil again. When cold water was added three times and then returned to a boil three times, the dumplings were considered "done." Many cooks in China still use this method to determine when the dumplings are thoroughly cooked, although with adjustable flames on stoves, it is no longer necessary.

