

CHINESE NEW YEAR - DUMPLING DELIGHTS

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The Chinese New Year starts on the 5th February celebrating the year of the Pig. The new year holiday will last for 7 days during which no one works. The celebrations will take place in China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines, not to mention major cities all over the world with large Chinese communities.

The Big Migration

To celebrate the festival over 800 million Chinese people will migrate home, this is known as the 'Big Migration' of the modern world. Fireworks, lanterns and dragon dances are all common features of this bright and colourful festival.

Traditional gifts are shared for prosperity and luck, including red envelopes filled with money and

spring letters written with black ink on red paper expressing rhymes and wishes of luck, happiness, wealth and longevity. Oranges and plum blossom are also used to signify riches, wealth, hope and courage.

Food and symbolism

Traditionally the most popular dishes eaten for Chinese New Year are dumplings, spring rolls, fish, noodles and chicken. The 'reunion dinner' dishes have certain symbolism – whole chicken ensures health, the fish meat balls, shrimp and meat ensure success in academic studies and the vegetables, intelligence. Citrus fruits have a special significance in Chinese culture representing health, prosperity, harmony and the positive energies from the universe. During New Year's evening, the first man who enters the house must bring 8 oranges and throw them on the floor.

As mentioned, Chinese dumplings are a well-known favourite. Below are a couple of recipes to whet your appetite.

xīn nián kuài lè - Happy New Year!

Pork Dumplings

Ingredients

Dipping sauce

- 120mls soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon seasoned rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped Chinese chives
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon chili-garlic sauce

Dumplings

- 1 pound ground pork
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped Chinese chives
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sesame oil

- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
- 50 dumpling wrappers
- 1 cup vegetable oil for frying
- 1 litre water, or more as needed

Preparation: 20 minutes. Cook time: 1 hour.

Method

Combine 120mls soy sauce, rice vinegar, 1 tablespoon chives, sesame seeds, and chilli sauce in a small bowl. Set aside.

Mix pork, garlic, egg, 2 tablespoons chives, soy sauce, sesame oil and ginger in a large bowl until thoroughly combined. Place a dumpling wrapper on a lightly floured work surface and spoon about 1 tablespoon of the filling in the middle. Wet the edge with a little water and crimp together forming small pleats to seal the dumpling. Repeat with remaining dumpling wrappers and filling.

Heat 1 to 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place 8 to 10 dumplings in the pan and cook until browned, about 2 minutes per side. Pour in 240mls of water, cover and cook until the dumplings are tender, and the pork is cooked through, about 5 minutes. Repeat for remaining dumplings. Serve with soy sauce mixture for dipping.

Vegetable Dumplings

Ingredients

Dumpling wrappers

- 770 grms all-purpose flour
- 230 mls, plus 2 tablespoons tepid water

Alternatively, you can just buy a package of pre-made dumpling wrappers.

Filling

- 3 tablespoons oil, plus ¼ cup
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cups shiitake mushrooms, chopped
- 1½ cups cabbage, finely shredded
- 1½ cups carrot, finely shredded
- 1 cup garlic chives (Chinese chives), finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons Shaoxing wine or dry sherry
- 2 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- salt, to taste

Preparation: 3 hours. Cooking time: 20 minutes. Recipe type: dim sum. Serves: 3 to 4 dozen.

Method

Start by making the dough for the dumpling wrappers. Put the flour in a large mixing bowl. Gradually add the water to the flour and knead into a smooth dough. This process should take about 10 minutes. Cover with a damp cloth and let the dough rest for an hour.

In the meantime, make the filling. In a wok or large skillet over medium high heat, add 3 tablespoons oil and add the ginger. Cook for 30 seconds, until fragrant. Add the onions and stir-fry until translucent.

Add the chopped mushrooms and stir-fry for another 3-5 minutes, until the mushrooms are tender, and any liquid released by the mushrooms has cooked off.

Add the cabbage and carrots and stir-fry for another 2 minutes, until the veggies are tender, and all the liquid released has been cooked off. Transfer the vegetable mixture to a large mixing bowl and allow to cool.

To the bowl, add the chopped chives, white pepper, sesame oil, Shaoxing wine, soy sauce, and sugar. Season with salt to taste (though the soy sauce will usually add enough salt to the filling) and stir in the last 60mls of oil.

To assemble the dumplings, cut the dough into small tablespoon-sized pieces. Roll each out into a circle and pleat the dumplings (see this post for step-by-step photos on how to fold a dumpling). Continue assembling until you've run out of filling and/or dough.

To cook the dumplings, steam them or pan-fry them. To steam, put the dumplings in a steamer

lined with a bamboo mat, cabbage leaf, or cheese cloth, and steam for 15-20 minutes.

To pan-fry, heat 2 tablespoons oil in a non-stick pan over medium high heat. Place the dumplings in the pan and allow to fry for 2 minutes. Pour a thin layer of water into the pan, cover, and reduce heat to medium-low. Allow dumplings to steam until the water has evaporated. Remove the cover, increase heat to medium-high and allow to fry for a few more minutes, until the bottoms of the dumplings are golden brown and crisp.

Serve with soy sauce, Chinese black vinegar, chili sauce. *Enjoy!*

Sources:

www.allrecipes.com/recipe/228052/chinese-pork-dumplings/

<https://thewoksoflife.com/2015/09/vegetable-dumplings/>