

# Dumplings During Chinese New Year

Instructor

Kian Lam Kho

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## 1. Introduction

Dumplings are one of those comfort foods found in just about every cuisine of the world. But the Chinese have developed an amazing array of dumplings with various kinds of wrappers and stuffing. Many of these dumplings have remained simple basic staples, but others have evolved into delicacies served at elegant banquets.

Generally, there are two main kinds of dumpling wrappers. Northerners usually use plain wheat flour wrappers, whereas southerners more commonly use egg and wheat flour noodle wrappers. Other wrappers can be made with starch, rice flour, whole rice or soy-based products.

Dumplings can have savory or sweet fillings that can include meat, vegetables or a combination of both. Given the vast number of regional Chinese cuisines it is not surprising that regional specialty dumplings exist. For example, in the southwestern part of China where chili is liberally used dumplings are some time served in spicy sauces.

Chinese dumplings are also made using a variety of cooking techniques. They can be boiled, steamed, pan-fried or deep-fried. They can be served by themselves as snacks, paired with noodles, used as an ingredient in hot pots, or served as a course in elaborate feasts.

In all their many forms dumplings have become a mainstay of Chinese cuisine. In northern China it is also customary to serve dumplings during Chinese New Year because the shape resembles ingot. In some areas of China dumplings made with yellow egg wrappers are served along white flour wrappers to represent gold and silver ingots at the New Year dinner table.

Today we are making the iconic northern style dumpling known as jiaozi (餃子) with a variation fried on a frying pan commonly known as pot-sticker (鍋貼). Enjoy!

## 2. Chinese Dumpling Making Techniques

### Types of Dumpling Dough

Although there are many different type of dumpling doughs we are going to be using hot water dough wrappers (燙麵) for this session. This dough is made by adding boiling water to regular all-purpose flour. The hot water partially cooks the protein in the flour and reduces the elasticity of the gluten, which results in a dough that can be easily rolled out as wrapper.

### Commercial Dumpling Wrappers

Many commercially made dumpling wrappers are available in the markets. Although they can be very convenient, they cannot rival the fresh chewiness of freshly made dough. If you decide to buy these commercial wrappers, look for round plain flour wrappers for making Jiaozi. The yellow wonton skin type wrappers are only suitable for Cantonese style dumplings.

### Boiling Dumplings (煮餃子)

Boiling is the most common way of cooking dumplings. Jiaozi and wontons are commonly cooked this way. When making wontons or other egg noodle wrapper based dumplings add them directly to a pot of boiling water. Cook for about five minutes or until they float to the top then drain them before serving them with noodles, a broth or a sauce.

When boiling jiaozi bring a pot of water to a boil then add the jiaozi. Wait for the water to boil again then add one cup of cold water to reduce the temperature. Repeat this process one more time and when the water comes to boil again the jiaozi are ready. Drain the jiaozi completely then serve.

### Steaming Dumplings (蒸餃子)

Steaming is another common way of cooking dumplings. This method of cooking is a favorite for making many of the Cantonese dimsum dumpling dishes. All wonton wrapper and sticky rice flour wrapper dumplings can be steamed successfully.

Jiaozi can also be steamed however in order for the dough to maintain the form of the dumplings properly they should be made with hot water dough. They are usually formed into decorative shapes.

### Pan-Frying Dumplings (煎餃子)

Pan-fried dumplings are sometimes known as pot stickers (鍋貼). They are in fact simply jiaozi fried in a flat bottom pan. The result is succulent dumplings with crisp brown crust at the bottom.

To make pan-fried dumplings first grease the frying pan generously then arrange the dumplings decoratively. Fry the dumplings until there is a slight crust at the bottom. Then pour 1/2 cup of hot water into the pan and cover to steam the dumplings. When the water evaporates uncover and let the bottom brown completely. Flip the dumplings over onto a plate and serve immediately.

### **Rolling Pins for Chinese Dumplings**

Rolling pins for Chinese dumplings are about ten inches long and one inch in diameter. They are used only for rolling elastic wheat flour dough. When rolling use one hand to hold the dough and the other to roll the pin with the palm. Rotate the dough slightly after each roll until it forms a round shape with thinner sides and a thicker center.

### 3. Recipes

#### Hot Water Dough (燙麵)

2 cups all purpose flour

3/4 cup boiling water

1/4 cup cold water

Put the flour in a mixing bowl and gradually add the hot water while mixing the dough with wooden chopsticks or a wooden spoon. The hot water will slightly cook the flour and it will form lumps. Continue to mix for about half a minute then add the cold water a few tablespoons at a time to adjust the dough's texture. At this point start using your hands to knead the dough. It will be sticky initially but not wet. Knead the dough until it is elastic and smooth. Let the dough rest for about half an hour before use. Cover the dough with a damp cloth or seal it with plastic wrap.

## Vegan Dumplings (素餃)

1 recipe of hot water dough

### Stuffing

6 ounces spinach (or pea shoots)

1/4 cup chopped bamboo shoots

1/4 cup chopped rehydrated dried shiitake mushrooms

1/4 cup chopped blanched carrots

1/4 cup finely chopped scallion

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Make the hot water dough and let it rest while making the stuffing. Blanch the spinach in boiling water for about 30 seconds. Drain the wilted spinach and squeeze as much liquid out as possible. Chop the spinach into very small pieces like course sand. Chop all the other ingredients in the same manner. Mix all the stuffing ingredients together and set aside.

Divide the dough into three equal portions. Roll each portion into a cylinder about 1/2 inch in diameter. Cut the cylinder into pieces about 1/2 inch wide. Roll the pieces into balls. Roll the balls into round wrappers and fill with about 1 tablespoon of stuffing. Pleat the edges into a crescent shape dumpling and press to seal.

Steam or boil the dumplings according to the instructions below.

## **Pork and Garlic Chive Dumplings (韭菜餃子)**

1 recipe of hot water dough

### Stuffing

8 ounces ground pork

8 ounces garlic chives

1/2 cup finely chopped scallion

1 teaspoon finely minced garlic

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Make the hot water dough and let it rest while making the stuffing. Chop the garlic chives into small pieces of about 1/8 inch. Mix all the stuffing ingredients together and set aside.

Divide the dough into three equal portions. Roll each portion into a cylinder about 1/2 inch in diameter. Cut the cylinder into pieces about 1/2 inch wide. Roll the pieces into balls. Roll the balls into round wrappers and fill with about 1 tablespoon of stuffing. Pleat the edges into a crescent shape dumpling and press to seal.

Boil or fry the dumplings according to the instructions below.



## **Pork and Napa Cabbage Dumplings (菜肉餃子)**

1 recipe of hot water dough

### Stuffing

8 ounces ground pork

8 ounces finely chopped napa cabbage

1/2 cup finely chopped scallion

1 teaspoon finely minced garlic

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Make the hot water dough and let it rest while making the stuffing. Chop the napa cabbage into small pieces of about 1/8 inch. Mix all the stuffing ingredients together and set aside.

Divide the dough into three equal portions. Roll each portion into a cylinder about 1/2 inch in diameter. Cut the cylinder into pieces about 1/2 inch wide. Roll the pieces into balls. Roll the balls into round wrappers and fill with about 1 tablespoon of stuffing. Pleat the edges into a crescent shape dumpling and press to seal.

Boil or fry the dumplings according to the instructions below.

## **Beef and Celery Jiaozi (芹菜牛肉餃子)**

1 recipe of hot water dough

### Stuffing

8 ounces ground beef

8 ounces Chinese celery (stems only)

1/2 cup finely chopped scallion

1 teaspoon finely minced fresh ginger

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Make the hot water dough and let it rest while making the stuffing. Chop the Chinese celery into small pieces of about 1/8 inch. Only use the stems. Mix all the stuffing ingredients together and set aside.

Divide the dough into three equal portions. Roll each portion into a cylinder about 1/2 inch in diameter. Cut the cylinder into pieces about 1/2 inch wide. Roll the pieces into balls. Roll the balls into round wrappers and fill with about 1 tablespoon of stuffing. Press and seal the edges together to form a crescent shaped dumpling.

Boil or fry the dumplings according to the instructions below.

## **Fish and Dill Jiaozi (茴香魚肉餃子)**

1 recipe of hot water dough

### Stuffing

8 ounces white fish fillet (hake or scrod)

8 ounces fresh dill

1/2 cup finely chopped scallion

1 teaspoon finely minced fresh ginger

egg white from 1 egg

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Make the hot water dough and let it rest while making the stuffing. Chop the dill into small pieces of about 1/8 inch. Chop the fish into pieces of about 1/8 inch then mash with the blade of the knife into a paste. Mix all the stuffing ingredients together and set aside.

Divide the dough into three equal portions. Roll each portion into a cylinder about 1/2 inch in diameter. Cut the cylinder into pieces about 1/2 inch wide. Roll the pieces into balls. Roll the balls into round wrappers and fill with about 1 tablespoon of stuffing. Press and seal the edges together to form a crescent shaped dumpling.

Boil or fry the dumplings according to the instructions below.

### **Boiling the Dumplings (煮餃子)**

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the dumplings into the pot and let it come to a boil again. Add one cup of cold water to the pot and let it come to boil again. Repeat one more time then drain the dumplings. Serve with thinly shredded ginger and black vinegar.

### **Frying the Dumplings (煎餃子/鍋貼)**

Pour about 1/8 inch layer of vegetable oil in a frying pan then arrange the dumplings in the pan. Fry the dumplings on medium heat for about one minute. Add 1/2 cup of warm water to the pan and cover. Let steam for about three minutes or until all the water has evaporated. Uncover the pan and let the bottoms of the dumplings continue to brown. As they brown they will loosen from the bottom of the pan and can be flipped onto a plate. Serve with thinly shredded ginger in black vinegar.

## About Kian Lam Kho

Kian Lam Kho is a food writer, cooking instructor and food consultant specializing in Chinese cuisine. He is the creator of the James Beard Foundation Awards nominated Chinese home cooking blog Red Cook (<http://www.redcook.net>), and his first cookbook on Chinese cooking techniques, *Phoenix Claws and Jade Trees: Essential Techniques of Authentic Chinese Cooking*, is the recipient of the Julia Child First Book Award from IACP (International Association of Culinary Professional) in 2016. He acted as consulting chefs in menu concept design for several restaurants in New York City and Fayetteville, Arkansas as well as food services at universities in Baltimore and Boston. He teaches Chinese cooking at the Institute of Culinary Education and the Brooklyn Kitchen.