

## Making Dumplings

Dumpling Dough (page 67) is versatile and is used regardless of the filling or the cooking method. Make the dough, make one or more of the fillings (see pages 71 to 77), and proceed to fill and fold the dumplings, per the instructions below. You then can decide which cooking method you want to follow (see Cooking Dumplings, page 64). You could boil and panfry, for example, or panfry all the dumplings. It's up to you. Finally, you can serve them with one or more dipping sauces (see pages 72 and 75).

### Filling Dumplings

Roll out about 6 wrappers at a time per Dumpling Dough instructions (page 67). Fill each wrapper with about 1 heaping teaspoon of your filling of choice.

### Folding Dumplings

The simplest way to seal a dumpling is to fold the wrapper over the filling into a half-moon shape. Match the edges together and press as if you were sealing an envelope. There is no need to dab homemade wrappers with water. There is enough moisture in the dough that the edges will seal when pressed. Holding the sealed edge of the dumpling between your fingers, set it on its spine and gently wiggle it as you are pushing down so that the dumpling will stand up. Place the completed dumpling on a baking sheet dusted with flour or lined with parchment paper. Repeat with the remaining dumplings.

To learn how to pleat the dumplings, see the step-by-step photos (opposite page).

### Storing Dumplings

Once you have made all the dumplings, you can cook them immediately or freeze them. If you freeze them, place the baking sheet of dumplings in the freezer for about 30 minutes to harden enough so they don't stick together. Then, transfer the dumplings to a ziplock bag and place them in the freezer to store for up to two or three weeks. You can cook them from frozen. Do not defrost or you will get a gooey mess. If you are cooking the dumplings immediately, proceed to any of the dumpling recipes in this chapter, and use the cooking methods found in Cooking Dumplings (page 64).



## Cooking Dumplings

You can use any combination of filling and cooking method for the dumplings. It all depends on what you crave.

My father loved to eat dumplings cooked every way. He was always the taste tester to see if the dumplings were cooked through. When boiling dumplings, my mom would scoop one dumpling out of the bubbling water, hand it to my father, and ask him, “Is it done?” He’d carefully take a bite of the dumpling and proclaim, “Yes, it’s done.” In the restaurant, we had this giant, thirty-inch commercial wok that easily accommodated the entire batch of dumplings at one time.

Steamed dumplings have the benefit of not getting waterlogged like the boiled dumplings. You can use a bamboo or metal steamer lined with blanched Chinese cabbage leaves or liners made of perforated parchment paper, which you can buy online or at Asian markets. You also can cut your own parchment circles and use a hole puncher or a skewer to make enough holes in the paper to let steam through.

Panfried dumplings, or pot stickers, seem to be a great equalizer. I don’t think I’ve met a person who doesn’t like pot stickers. Even burned pot stickers taste good—just ask my brother, who ate a plate of pot stickers I accidentally burned while attending to another matter. Even though I hid the burnt ones, my brother found them and ate them anyway. When we have extended family over for dinner, there never seems to be enough pot (*guo*) stickers (*tie*) to go around. Being able to make big batches of pot stickers is the reason I own a large nonstick skillet. The nonstick surface browns well and releases the dumplings more consistently. You also can use a cast-iron pan.

### To Boil Dumplings

In a large soup pot or stockpot over high heat, bring 4 quarts of water to a boil. Carefully add about half of the prepared dumplings, or only as many as your pot can accommodate without crowding. Return to a boil and then cook the dumplings for 4½ to 5 minutes. If you are cooking frozen dumplings, boil them for 1 to 2 minutes more. Keep an eye on the water as it may bubble over, and adjust the heat as necessary. The dumplings are done when they puff up. Remove the pot from the heat. Using a large slotted spoon or handled strainer, transfer the dumplings to a serving plate.

### To Steam Dumplings

Set up the steamer (see page 47). Line a steamer basket with steamer paper or perforated parchment paper, and place the prepared dumplings in a single layer in the basket, leaving about 1 inch between dumplings. Place the steamer basket on top of the pot, and steam, covered, for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the wrappers puff up. The cooking time will depend on the filling; meat fillings take longer. If you are cooking frozen dumplings, steam them for 1 to 2 minutes more.

### To Panfry Dumplings (Pot Stickers)

Preheat an 8- or 9-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat for about 1 minute. (If you have a bigger or smaller skillet, that's fine. Adjust the oil amount as needed.) Avoid high heat, which can cause the nonstick coating to deteriorate. Add enough vegetable oil to generously coat the entire surface of the pan and create a slight pool of oil (about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch deep). This may seem like a lot of oil, but it will help you create that telltale crispy pot sticker crust.

Carefully arrange the dumplings in a single layer in the skillet, flat side down. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water to the skillet and cover immediately. Cook for 7 to 9 minutes, or until the water has evaporated and the bottoms of the dumplings have reached a golden brown. The cooking time may vary slightly depending on your stove. Frozen dumplings may need 1 minute more to cook. Adjust the heat as needed.

If you have leftover dumplings, store them in the refrigerator and eat within a couple of days. To reheat, place them in a lightly oiled pan over medium-low heat and let the filling come to temperature. This will refresh the crispiness of the crust. Or you can eat them cold, as I sometimes do.



#### PANFRY VARIATION

**To make pot sticker lace:** The best part of the pot sticker is the crispy crust. Some restaurants add starch water to the pan, which crisps up to create a lacy sheet of crust surrounding the pot stickers. In a small bowl, place 1 tablespoon plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons

cornstarch to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water and mix to combine. Instead of water, add this mixture to the pan. It will result in a lacy crust. Be sure to flip the dumplings over on a plate so that the beautiful crust is facing up.

## A NOTE ON DUMPLING VERNACULAR

In the Chinese language, each type of dumpling or bun has its own name that denotes the type of wrapper, filling, folding technique, and cooking method. These don't always translate concisely into English. For example, *xiao long tang bao* literally means "little steamer basket soup dumpling." In English, we call them soup dumplings or, if we refer to the transliteration, we say *xiao long bao* or XLB. This isn't precise, however. In Chinese, we distinguish *xiao long bao* and *xiao long tang bao*, because there are versions that don't have soup in them and *tang* (sounds like "tahng," not Tang the orange drink) indicates the kind that contains soup. Confusion also surrounds the term "pot stickers," which has become so ubiquitous in English that people mistakenly use it as a generic term for these crescent-shaped,

meat-filled dumplings. In Chinese, we use *jiao zi* as the general term. If we boil them, we use *shui jiao*, or "water dumpling." Steamed dumplings are *zheng jiao* and panfried pot stickers are *guo tie*. Dialectical differences in transliterations increase the level of difficulty. Case in point: The Cantonese term for shrimp (*har*) dumplings (*gow*) in wheat starch wrappers is *har gow*. The Mandarin term is *xia jiao*. The Cantonese *siu mai* or *shumai* is the Mandarin *shao mai*. You know these dumplings, of course, from visits to Cantonese dim sum (or *dian xin* in Mandarin) restaurants. Navigating these terms is, indeed, challenging—this is why you see picture menus in Chinese restaurants. Assume that there is usually something lost in translation and, when in doubt, ask.

# Dumpling Dough

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND DOUGH  
(FOR ABOUT 48 DUMPLINGS)**

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2½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour,  
plus more for dusting

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¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon warm water  
(about 105 to 110 degrees F)

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All-purpose flour and water. It really doesn't get more straightforward than that. What takes practice is using your eyes and sense of touch to determine just how thirsty the flour is on a given day, because the moisture content of the flour and the humidity in the air both can affect how the dough comes together. I tell you this so that you know you need to pay attention, but I don't want you to stress about these factors. If the dough feels too sticky, then a little more flour will bring the dough back into balance. The recipe calls for warm water because flour absorbs warm water more easily and it creates a more supple texture. This dough can be used for dumplings, Green Onion Pancakes (page 90), or Home-Style Hand-Cut Noodles (page 129). You will need a Chinese rolling pin. This recipe yields enough dumplings that you can freeze extras to serve another time.

- Put the flour in a large bowl. Add all of the water. Using a rubber spatula, a wooden spoon, a pair of chopsticks, or your fingers, stir the water and flour together until a shaggy ball of dough starts to form. Now, use your hands to start kneading the dough and incorporating any remaining flour. The dough should feel slightly tacky but not damp. It should not stick to your fingers.
- Dust your work surface with flour. Remove the dough from the bowl and knead for about 2 minutes. It should feel smooth. Cover the dough with a damp towel or plastic wrap and let it rest on the counter for a minimum of 20 minutes. (While it doesn't need much longer than that, it won't hurt the dough if it happens to rest longer.)
- Alternatively, you can use a stand mixer to form the dough. Add the flour to the bowl of the stand mixer, and add the water gradually while running the dough hook at medium-low speed. Once the dough comes together, knead for about 2 minutes. Cover the dough and let it rest for 20 minutes. (This dough will hold for several hours at room temperature. It will get stickier, so you will have to knead in about 1 to 2 tablespoons of flour to refresh it. It's best to make this dough the same day you want to use it.)
- Once rested, divide the dough in half. On a surface lightly dusted with flour, roll each half into a rope that's about ¾ inch in diameter and about 18 inches in length. Using a knife or a bench scraper, cut each rope into pieces that are about ¾ inch thick. Each piece should weigh about 9 or 10 grams (see note, page 69).





- Roll each piece of dough into a small ball and then flatten it between your palms to create a disc that resembles a wafer cookie. Press your thumb gently into the dough to create a small indentation. Position your rolling pin between you and the base of the wafer of dough. Dust lightly with flour as needed. Roll the pin forward across the dough and back. You do not need to lift the rolling pin. Turn the dough 90 degrees and repeat the forward-and-back rolling. Turn the dough 90 degrees again and repeat the rolling. This forms the beginnings of a circle.

- Repeat this for the second revolution, but, for subsequent turns, roll the pin only halfway up. For the third revolution, roll the pin only a third of the way up. The idea is to leave the center of the circle just slightly thicker than the outer edges. The wrapper should end up being a circle about  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter. Don't worry if the circle isn't perfect; it only needs to be roundish. If it looks like an oval, then round it out. If it's lopsided beyond repair, then bunch up the dough into a ball and start again. Unless you have an assembly line of friends or family helping you, roll out about six wrappers at a time. If you roll out too many, they start to stick to each other and the edges will dry out, which makes it harder to seal.

**NOTE:** These dimensions are meant as a guideline. You could make these larger, if you'd like. You would end up with fewer dumplings and each would require more filling. The key is to keep the size consistent, so the dumplings cook consistently. I wouldn't make these smaller, however, because it makes it more challenging to fold the dumplings, especially if you have big hands or you are a beginner.



If you don't have time to make your own wrappers, you can use store-bought dumpling or gyoza wrappers. There are many brands available, and most stores these days sell at least one type of dumpling wrapper. At Chinese markets,

you can usually find thin, medium, and thick dumpling wrappers. The thicker ones are better for pot stickers, because they won't tear as easily. Dab water on the edges to help seal.



# Pork and Chinese Cabbage Dumplings

## MAKES ABOUT 45 TO 50 DUMPLINGS

1 batch Dumpling Dough (page 67)

Soy-Ginger Dipping Sauce (recipe follows), for serving

### For the filling:

1 pound ground pork

2½ cups loosely packed, finely chopped Chinese cabbage

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 stalk green onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon minced ginger

1 teaspoon sesame oil

¼ teaspoon white pepper powder

Pork and Chinese cabbage make the classic dumpling filling. I recommend using the best ground pork you can find. I buy ground Kurobuta pork. Kurobuta is the Japanese name for the Berkshire breed of pig. It's a high-quality pork that has plenty of marbling, which gives the filling great flavor. You also can buy ground pork from your favorite local farmer. If you have access only to what is available at your nearest supermarket, it's totally fine. This recipe will work. What I suggest is to buy unseasoned bulk sausage instead of the regular ground pork, which tends to be too lean, making the flavor flat after it's cooked. The other option, if you have a meat grinder, is to grind some pork butt for the filling. Chinese cabbage, also called napa cabbage, is widely available. The filling can be made up to a day ahead.

- Make the dough according to the recipe. While the dough is resting, make the Soy-Ginger Dipping Sauce and set aside.
- To make the filling, in a medium bowl, combine the pork, cabbage, soy sauce, onions, ginger, oil, and pepper, and mix well. Set the filling aside.
- Fill the wrappers with the prepared filling (see Making Dumplings, page 62).
- Boil, steam, or panfry the dumplings (see Cooking Dumplings, page 64), and serve with the dipping sauce.



**MAKES ABOUT ¼ CUP**

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⅓ cup soy sauce

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2 tablespoons rice vinegar

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1 stalk green onion, finely chopped

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2 large cloves garlic, finely chopped  
or crushed

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1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

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1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger

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1 teaspoon chili sauce (optional)

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## Soy-Ginger Dipping Sauce

People tell me that they could drink this sauce. In fact, I've caught my son sneaking sips of this sauce even before the pot stickers were ready. It hits all the right spots on your palate with its salty, vinegary, pungent flavors. You can add more or less of any given ingredient. Instead of rice vinegar, you could use Chinese black vinegar or balsamic vinegar.

■ In a small bowl, combine the soy sauce, vinegar, onions, garlic, cilantro, ginger, and chili sauce. Set aside on the counter for at least 30 minutes, if possible, to let the flavors meld together. The longer the mixture rests, the more intense the flavor becomes. You can store the dipping sauce in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.