

KITCHEN HELPERS

帮厨



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Yiping Dong



COOKING & TYPOGRAPHY

好吃不如饺子  
舒服不如倒着



## 饺子 JIAOZI

### HISTORY OF DUMPLINGS

The exact origin story of dumplings isn't quite clear, although a few legends exist about their creation. But we know dumpling consumption is thought to have begun around 200 BCE during the Han Dynasty. The Chinese had figured out how to grind flour about 300 years earlier, which led to noodles and, eventually, dumplings.

Some say that the first dumplings were made with lamb and pepper, but since then, they have adapted. Most dumplings now have a pork mixture as their filling.

In China, wheat was considered a delicacy, so only the wealthy elite ate dumplings. But by 500 CE, the production of wheat and ground wheat had grown, so dumplings became more accessible.

It is around this time that we see the first mention of a dumpling that was "shaped like a half-moon and...was passed around the world." Since then, not much has changed about the way dumplings are made.

## ORIGINATE OF DUMPLINGS

Dumplings are thought to have been created in Northern China. Eventually they moved south to the Cantonese, who were the first Chinese immigrants to America, and brought their dumplings with them. As a result, this led to their popularization in the US.

## TRADITIONS SURROUNDING DUMPLINGS

Because of their long history, many traditions surround jiaozi. The most popular tradition we see today is to eat them with the Lunar New Year celebrations.

Dumplings slightly resemble the shape of a type of golden ingot that was used as a currency in China hundreds of years ago. For this reason, dumplings are a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

For the Lunar New Year, the Chinese ring in their new year with this symbol, hoping to mark the next year with financial blessing.

## COOKING DUMPLINGS

Dumplings can be cooked in various ways, depending on what application you're going to use them for. Let's look at the three main ways they are cooked.

### *Boiled*

Boiled dumplings are quite common but not to be eaten on their own. When you boil dumplings, they are most often put into dumpling soup. The rich broth combined with the savory, filling dumplings makes for a dish that will warm you to the bone and leave your stomach satisfied.

### *Pan-Fried*

Many people will often pan-fry their dumplings as well. In China, this is a less common method of cooking dumplings. Fried food tends to be a bit less popular, and some consider it to be associated with lower-class food.

However, when the Japanese were introduced to jiaozi, they put their own spin on things and renamed the dumpling "gyoza." One of their main methods of cooking dumplings is pan-frying them.

In both Chinese and Japanese cooking, the dumpling is placed in an oiled skillet and fried until golden brown on the bottom. Then a bit of water is placed in the pan, and a lid is put over the top. The steam cooks the dumplings the rest of the way.

### *Steamed*

Perhaps the most common way to cook dumplings is by steaming them. Steamed dumplings are incredibly warm and have a super soft texture. It's like biting into a pillow of umami and flavor!

The dumplings are placed in bamboo steaming baskets and placed over a pot of boiling water. The steam rises through the basket, cooking the dumpling all the way through. This method is a healthy way to cook your dumplings. It certainly cuts out a lot of fat.



## 帮厨 KITCHEN HELPERS

### A MEMOIR

I had been living alone for a long time since I was 17, when I started college. Now, at 21, I am soon to graduate. Over the past few years, my life has gotten busier and busier. I used to cook almost every meal for myself and bring food with me to school and work. However, now I spend over \$300 per month on takeout, mostly fast food. Also my grocery list became more and more focused on instant food, compared to my balanced meat, veggie and fruit list I had before. Among all the grocery stores I have access to, I love Trader Joe's the most, because they have all kinds of delicious frozen food, however, there is one thing I complain about. There aren't good frozen dumplings there, and I don't always have time to go to Asian grocery stores.

I love dumplings, but I don't think they are necessarily my favorite food. However, they are so convenient and can fulfill my desire for real Chinese food easily in the States.

My favorite filling for frozen dumplings is pork and corn because corn won't lose its texture or flavor after being

frozen. I don't think any green vegetables can do that. However, if I talk about all the fillings I've had, I love pork and fennel the most. Unfortunately, the fennel available in the States doesn't taste the same as the Chinese ones in my memory. My second favorite is pork and chives because chives are easy to grow in our backyard, so we can get them fresh and strong.

At home in South Carolina, we have a whole part of our backyard, about 4 ft by 12 ft, where we grow all kinds of vegetables. We grow chives around the whole perimeter of that piece of land. Every time my family decides to make dumplings, we use scissors to cut about 4 ft to 6 ft of chives, depending on how many people are home. Once we finish cutting off the whole perimeter, the ones at the starting point have regrown to a good point to be turned into dumplings again.

Dumplings represent family reunions. Some people may associate them with the Spring Festival, but for my family, we make dumplings for all kinds of holidays because we are simply a family of dumpling lovers.

We also make dumplings when someone is leaving home. There is a tradition called “滚蛋饺子接风面,” which means that dumplings should be eaten before saying goodbye to someone, and noodles should be the first meal when someone arrives at your door.

I have talked a lot about my preferences and traditions regarding dumplings, but there is another keyword that keeps appearing: family.

Although I can make really good dumplings myself in my apartment, it doesn't feel the same because dumplings take

a long time to make. It's much easier if the whole family gathers around the counter to work on them while having a great conversation.

My aunt calls me the best kitchen helper because she knows I am reliable and always happy to help. I am fluent in all kitchen tasks, and she doesn't need to worry about assigning me anything.

Making dumplings together is a solid family activity that everyone enjoys and looks forward to. Everyone takes pride in the outcome of this activity and enjoys the dumplings. It's also fortunate that the whole family loves pork and chives as a filling, so there won't be any arguments about “the filling of the night”.

But now, instead of homemade dumplings, I know too much about store-bought frozen dumplings and all the available brands and fillings. However, eating them on New Year's Eve feels more like a task that I have to complete on that day. I won't be eating a plate of warm dumplings before leaving home for a trip on my study desk myself, and I look forward to the taste of homemade noodles welcoming me back home more than ever before.



## 猪肉韭菜饺子 PORK & CHIVE DUMPLINGS

### RECIPE

#### Ingredients

- 1 pound of flour
- 8 oz water
- 8 oz ground pork
- 8 oz fresh chive
- 1 egg
- ½ oz ginger
- 2 green onions
- soy sauce
- Chinese cooking wine
- sesame oil
- oyster sauce
- salt

#### Cooking Steps

##### Wrappers

1. Add all flour and 8 oz water to a big bowl
2. Mix flour and water together until all water is absorbed by flour
3. Knead the dough with hand or stand mixer until it is no longer sticky
4. Roll the dough into strip with a diameter of about one inch.
5. Cut the dough into small pieces about ¾ inch long pieces.
6. Press each of the small pieces flat, and roll around their edges with a rolling pin until they are about the size of your palm.

##### Filling

1. Mince chive, ginger, and green onion, and mix them with all the ground pork thoroughly in a big bowl
2. Add the egg, two table spoon of cooking wine, one table spoon of soy sauce, one table spoon of sesame oil, a tea spoon of oyster sauce, and a tea spoon of salt into the bowl and keep mixing until chopsticks can easily stand straight in it

##### Wrap the Dumplings

1. Add a ball of filling that is about one inch in diameter
2. Stick the edge of the wrapper together and make sure the dumpling is fully closed.

## Boiling the Dumplings

1. Add enough of water in pot that all dumplings will be fully in water
2. Bring the water to boil then add the dumplings
3. Stir a little to make sure the dumplings won't stick to the bottom
4. Add cold water to the pot when the water is fully boiled until it is not bubbling anymore
5. Repeat step 4 for twice
6. Your dumplings are ready when they are all floating
7. Take your dumplings out of pot and serve with Chinese black vinegar for dipping

## Other Cooking Methods

You can also pan fry or steam the dumplings, but boiling is the traditional and most common cooking method in Northern China.



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