



April 22, 2006

Dumplings for Dumplings!

Dumplings, or *jiaozi* (饺子) is a traditional Chinese food that is often eaten during holidays, especially in Northern China. During the New Year, families often come together to make the dumplings—starting from making the dumplings skins out of flour, to mixing the meat and vegetables for the filling, and finally wrapping the final dumplings together in a shape that is similar to an ancient Chinese gold or silver ingot. For this reason, dumplings often symbolize wealth and good fortune in the year to come; sometimes a coin is hidden in one of the dumplings, which brings good luck to its finder.

Dumplings come in many different kinds, and styles vary across regions. The filling usually consists of ground meat (usually pork), and finely chopped vegetables (which can vary greatly, from spinach to Chinese cabbage to Chinese chives, and many more). A variety of other ingredients and seasonings can also be added to add to the filling, which often depends on regional preferences. When the dumplings are wrapped (which can also include different styles), they can be either fried to make “potstickers” or *guotie* (锅贴), or can be boiled in water and served dry or in a soup.

Jessica's Family Recipe: pork and spinach dumplings

ingredients

4 lb ground pork * 4 or 5 packs of frozen chopped (or "cut-leaf") spinach
soy sauce * sesame oil * salt/pepper * 2 eggs
4-5 packs of dumpling skins (usually 50 skins each; found in the frozen section of most Asian supermarkets, such as Super88)

the filling

The filling should be of a spreadable consistency, paste-like, moist not too watery, so that it will hold its shape and can be scooped. Stir and mix thoroughly with chopsticks or a large spoon after each ingredient is added!

Thaw the ground pork and spinach

Put the ground meat in a large bowl or pot, season with salt and pepper

Squeeze all the water out of the thawed spinach and add to the mix

Add about 1/3 to 1/2 cup of soy sauce and twice as much sesame oil

Add the 2 eggs

the dumplings

Thaw the dumpling skins completely

Peel off one individual skin; scoop about 1 tbsp of filling into the center of the skin

Wet the perimeter of the skin with water

Bring the 2 halves together; pinch the skin closed tightly so that the filling will stay sealed inside (like a turnover)

Repeat until either you run out of dumpling skins or filling (both can be frozen and used at a future date)

cooking (by water)

Bring a pot of water to boil

Add the dumplings, stirring as you do this so that the dumplings do not stick to each other or the pot

When the water boils, add a cup of water (or ice) so that boiling subsides

When the water boils again, add another cup of water or ice

When the water boils for the 3rd time, the dumplings should float at the surface and are ready to eat!

enjoying

Try your dumplings with soy sauce, vinegar, or a mixture of both.

Like it hot? Add some peppers to your sauce. Or try some garlic or ginger!

Leftover dumplings make a great treat lightly pan-fried!

