

# Food & Drink

STEPHEN HARRIS

The story of this pear pudding might be cobblers

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A COMFORTING CRUMBLE / WHAT'S YOUR VALENTINE'S TIPPLE?

## Duck guo kui

MAKES ABOUT 24

### INGREDIENTS

- 300g duck mince
- 40g spring onion, finely chopped
- 20g fresh ginger, minced
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 1 tsp finely ground green Sichuan pepper
- 20g duck fat
- ½ portion prepared xian bing dumpling dough (see page 13)
- Vegetable oil, for frying

### METHOD

- Mix together the duck mince, spring onion, ginger, chilli flakes, Sichuan pepper and duck fat, until you have a smooth texture that you can spread easily.
- Take a 23g portion of the dumpling dough and roll it out to a 15cm-long baguette shape that's 1-2mm thick.
- Spread 15g of the duck mixture all over the dough, leaving a 1cm border around the edges.
- Roll up the dough from

end to end and set it so the spiral faces upwards. Press down gently with a rolling pin to make a Frisbee shape 5cm across and about 1cm thick. Repeat with the rest of the dough and filling.

- Pour in a 5mm layer of oil to a frying pan and set over a medium-high heat. Once the pan is hot, just before smoking, add the dumplings and pan fry for about 2½ minutes on both sides or until they turn nice and golden. Serve immediately.



## Rabbit dumplings in jade sauce

MAKES ABOUT 30

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the filling

- 200g rabbit meat
- 200g pork shoulder
- 100g pork back fat
- 5g salt
- 5ml soy sauce
- 10g sugar
- 5g tahini
- 2 pieces pre-soaked dried shiitake mushroom
- 10g celery
- 5g coriander stalks
- 30g lard

#### To assemble

- 1 portion prepared boiled dumpling dough (see page 13)
- Plain flour, for dusting

#### For the jade sauce

- 200ml chicken stock
- 3 tbsp parsley, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp celery, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp carrot leaves, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp broccoli florets, finely grated
- 25g cornflour, to thicken

### METHOD

- Cut the rabbit meat, pork shoulder and pork back fat into 5mm cubes. Don't mince the meat as the texture of the cubed meat is important for this recipe. It will take you some time, but it's worth it.
- Mix the cubes together in a large bowl and knead them well until sticky. Add the salt, soy, sugar and tahini to the meat and mix well.
- Finely chop the rehydrated shiitake, celery and coriander stalks and mix in to the meat along with the lard. Leave in the fridge while you start working on the dough.
- Remove the cling film from the dumpling dough and divide it into 10g balls.
- On a floured surface, roll out a ball into a round disc 7cm across and 1-2mm thick. Place a tablespoon of the meat mixture in the centre and fold the dumpling in half. A light spray of water over the inner side of the dough will help to join the edges. Pinch them to enclose the filling, so that the seam runs over the centre of the plump, round dumpling. Repeat with the rest of the dough and filling.
- Bring a pan of water to boil. Boil the dumplings for seven minutes.
- Meanwhile, bring the chicken stock to boil for the sauce. When the dumplings have boiled, add all the herbs and a pinch of salt and white pepper to the stock. Mix some cornflour with about three tablespoons of water and add this, as needed, to thicken the sauce. Serve with the dumplings.

# Savour the flavours of Chinese New Year

Dumplings are a friendly thing. They don't need to look perfect, so don't be afraid – just start making them," chef Erchen Chang reassures me. "Even if they're a little ugly, they can still taste amazing."

I'm in good hands. Chang is the co-founder of Taiwanese street-food success story Bao, a restaurant group famous for its steamed soy rice buns, stuffed with delights such as confit pork belly and shallots, and lamb shoulder with mint and coriander.

Chang, her husband Shing Tat Chung, and sister-in-law Wai Ting Chung launched their business from a stall at Netil Market in east London in

Perfect dumplings are an integral part of the annual celebration – and they're easier to make than you think. Chef Erchen Chang shares a selection of her recipes with *Madeleine Howell*

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## FOOD & DRINK

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2013. Now, it encompasses three restaurants: casual dining spots Bao Soho and Bao Fitzrovia, and the grand, art deco-style Soho dining room XU (pronounced "shu"). Chang describes the latter as more "mature, theatrical, exclusive... it's a place to have a good time, to play mah-jong, and to feel like you're being treated."

But today I'm learning about dumplings, in preparation for Chinese New Year on Feb 16. Dumplings are an integral part of the celebrations - and not as hard to make as you might think, says Chang. "It's easy - it just takes a little time and care," she advises.

Chang makes both boiled or steamed sway jow or "water dumplings", and pan-fried dumplings (xian bing) cooked in just a little oil. "They are very different in terms of texture and taste," she notes. "A pan-fried dumpling has a crispy texture, caramelised in flavour. The fat from the meat cooks on medium high heat and is bursting with juiciness when you bite into it. A boiled dumpling creates a softer skin casing

**'We may add a coin to the dumpling, and the person to bite into it will have a very lucky year'**

**XU is running a special menu of Taiwanese dishes for Chinese New Year, available Feb 16-18 (xulondon.com)**

**GO EASY**  
Making perfect dumplings takes a little time and care' says Erchen Chang

for the fillings, and showcases your ingredients in pureness." Pan-fried dumplings originate from northern China, but are also a popular tradition in Taiwan.

Chang herself has fond memories of large Chinese New Year gatherings in Taiwan at her grandparents' house, where her grandmother, Chen Xiu Xu, took charge of the kitchen.

At the moment, Chang is particularly keen on rabbit and pork dumplings with jade sauce. "The sauce should be made with stock, fresh herbs and vegetables, and on wintry days like this, there isn't a better cure," she says. Meanwhile, the pan-fried xian bing is a notable symbol of good luck and prosperity at this time of year, since its shape resembles old Chinese money, yuanbao. "There's so much symbolism in all the food you eat at New Year," she explains. "People always look for connections, and turn things around to represent luck. We sometimes add a coin to the dumpling, and the person to bite into it will have a very lucky year."

"The wholeness is another symbol of good luck," she explains. "You should always eat a whole fish - but then always leave a little bit. In Chinese, this sounds like you have 'plenty left over', and means that your year will be plentiful."

Chang's childhood feasts certainly sound bountiful: "My family always celebrated at my grandparents' house, and it was all about eating, eating, eating. On the day itself, there was always an endless amount of food.

One table for the adults, a small table for the kids - and then a table for soup, crab, lobster, fish and anything else you could think of. The kitchen was right next to the dining room, and my grandma would just keep churning out

dishes, and all my aunts would help." After a pause for tea, cards and mah-jong, came dessert. "We'd have pan-fried rice cakes or steamed rice cakes," Chang recalls. "In Chinese the word for steam cake means to raise high, and to prosper."

At XU, Chang has also created a ceremonial tea and whisky pairing with Taiwanese Kavalan whisky to round off a meal. "The fiery heat of the whisky and the temperature of the tea works really well together to finish a meal on a high," she says. When celebrating Chinese New Year, she also enjoys kao-liang wine, a liquor made from fermented sorghum, which can be drunk as shots. "It's similar to vodka, about 50 per cent alcohol, and it's hard to get hold of in the UK. Whenever someone visits from Taiwan, I ask them to bring a bottle for me," she laughs. If you can get hold of some yourself, it's the perfect accompaniment to these celebratory dumplings.



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Compiled by Madeleine Howell

### Pork xian bing dumplings

MAKES ABOUT 22

#### INGREDIENTS

**For the filling**  
250g pork mince  
2 tbsp Shaoxing wine  
1½ tsp light soy sauce  
1 tsp sesame oil  
¼ tsp salt  
1½ tsp sugar  
Pinch of white pepper  
5g diced fresh root ginger  
5g diced red chilli  
60g spring onion, white parts only, finely chopped

#### To assemble

½ portion prepared xian bing dumpling dough (see above right)  
Plain flour, for dusting  
Vegetable oil, for frying

#### METHOD

□ Combine all the filling ingredients together in a large bowl and mix well.  
□ Remove the clingfilm from the dumpling dough and divide it into 23g balls (about ping-pong-ball-sized).  
□ On a floured surface, roll out a dough ball into a round disc approx 8cm across and 2-3mm thick.  
□ Place a tablespoon of the pork mixture in the centre. Holding the dough disc in your left hand (if you are right-handed), start to pinch the edges of the dough together, working clockwise in pleats, until the filling is completely enclosed (see pictures, right).  
□ Repeat with the rest of the dough and filling, and leave the dumplings to sit

in floured containers for 30 minutes, or an hour in the fridge if you have time. This gives a really nice bubble to the surface (thanks to the yeast) and results in a very thin and crispy texture.  
□ Pour in a 5mm layer of oil to a large frying pan and set over a medium-high heat.  
□ Once the oil is hot, add the dumplings in batches, pleated-side down. Turn the heat down to medium and fry for 4-5 minutes, checking on the colouring of the dumpling occasionally. They should turn golden brown.  
□ Flip the dumplings over and cook on the smooth side for another 2-3 minutes, to the same colour.  
□ Serve immediately.

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### Xian bing dumpling dough

**MAKES ENOUGH FOR 70 DUMPLINGS**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 500g plain flour, preferably low-gluten
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- 1/16 tsp yeast
- 300ml water, at a temperature of 45C

**METHOD**

- Place everything in a large bowl and bring together to combine, then knead for 10 minutes until smooth. Shape into a ball and wrap in cling film.
- Set aside until you are ready to use it.

### HOW TO MAKE THE PERFECT DUMPLINGS

**1** Before you start, get your tools ready. If you can, get hold of a small rolling pin. I make my own: go to any hardware store and buy a dowel, cut it down and sand it.



**2** Work with the best ingredients you can find: you can find seasonal delicacies such as bamboo shoots in Chinatown. At XU, we work with amazing suppliers including Philip Warren Butchers in Cornwall and farms in North Yorkshire - make sure you use a great butcher.



**3** Clear a large surface to work on - be generous with the flour, and use enough to stretch the dough.

**4** If you don't flour the dough enough, it will stick to your rolling pin, and your dumplings may get stuck together before they are boiled.



**5** Make sure the water is at a rolling boil before you put your dumplings in. Don't hurry, because that will lead to failure! Remember, practice makes perfect.

### Boiled dumpling dough

**MAKES ENOUGH FOR ABOUT 30 DUMPLINGS**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 250g flour
- 150ml cold water

□ Mix the flour and water together with a pinch of salt and knead for 15 minutes. Let it rest for 30 minutes then wrap in cling film.

□ Keep in the fridge until ready to use.

### Boiled mushroom dumplings

**MAKES ABOUT 23**

**INGREDIENTS**

- For the filling**
- 40g dried shiitake mushrooms
  - 185g fresh shiitake mushrooms
  - 125g oyster mushrooms
  - 100g lotus root, available from Chinese supermarkets
  - Vegetable oil, for frying
  - 10g fresh root ginger, peeled and finely diced
  - 50ml Shaoxing wine
  - 40ml light soy sauce

**To assemble**

- 1 portion prepared boiled dumpling dough (see above)
- Plain flour, for dusting

**METHOD**

□ To make the filling, soak the dried shiitake mushrooms in 150ml of filtered water and set aside for an hour.

□ Meanwhile, chop up the fresh shiitake and oyster mushrooms into 8mm dice. Peel and grate the lotus root.

□ Once the dried shiitake mushrooms have soaked, strain and place the mushroom liquid aside.

□ Chop the soaked shiitake to the same size as the other mushrooms.

□ Place a frying pan over a medium-high heat and add a splash of vegetable oil. Fry the ginger and all the mushrooms until all are properly sweated, about 10 minutes.

□ Add the Shaoxing wine and cook down until the liquid disappears, then do the same with the soy.

□ Add the grated lotus root

and fry for a further 10 minutes, adding some of the mushroom soaking liquid until it binds the mixture together. Remove from the heat and set aside.

□ To make the dumplings, boil a large pan of water.

□ Remove the cling film from the dumpling dough and divide it into 12g balls (about the size of marbles).

□ On a floured surface, roll out a dough ball into a circular disc 7cm across and 1-2mm thick. Place a tablespoon of the mushroom filling in the centre. Fold the dumpling dough in half and pinch the edges together to enclose the filling in a half-moon shape. Bring the tips together and pinch to seal.

Repeat with the rest of the dough and filling.

□ Add a pinch of salt to the water. Then add the dumplings in batches and boil for about three minutes or until they float.

□ Serve with the red chilli oil (see right).

### Red chilli oil dressing

**MAKES ENOUGH FOR DIPPING ABOUT 30 DUMPLINGS**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 100g chilli-infused oil (ideally with chilli flakes still in it)
- 45g caster sugar
- 160ml Chinkiang vinegar (Chinese black rice vinegar, available from theasiancookshop.co.uk)
- 65ml sesame oil
- 55g rapeseed oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed and finely chopped
- Small pinch of white pepper

**METHOD**

□ Combine the ingredients with a pinch of salt to taste and place in a serving dish.

□ As soon as the mushroom dumplings are ready, place on a plate and serve with the chilli oil dressing.



HARALA HAMILTON FOR THE TELEGRAPH



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