

Recipe Packet: Dim Sum Party

What is Dim Sum?

With its literal translation, “touch the heart,” the experience of dim sum nourishes the body with its tasty morsels of food and fragrant teas while at the same time soothes the soul with its many opportunities to pass the time with friends and family. Usually served as a light meal or brunch, “yum cha” (or, “drink tea”) is a leisurely way to spend a weekend afternoon catching up with gossip, reading the paper or just people watching.

Dim sum as a culinary trend is not unique; it is an abundance of small plates where portions are bite-sized and served in small quantities. The meal is paired with a traditional beverage (in this case, tea) making it not unlike the English afternoon tea, Spanish tapas, French hors d’oeuvres or Italian antipasto. In each instance, people gather together to share small plates of deliciously prepared and exquisitely presented food and sip traditional beverages paired with the food. Happier memories are shared, good times for all.

The roots of dim sum’s development reach back beyond the 3rd century in the teahouses along China’s Silk Road. Travelers would stop along these teahouses for refreshment and respite from their journeys. Teas were offered, as well as nuts and dried fruits. Originally, food was not taken with tea, as it was believed to cause excessive weight gain. It was not until the discovery of tea’s ability to aid digestion and cleanse the palate that teahouses began to offer more snacks in larger variety that the custom of dim sum was born.

Making Dim Sum at Home:

When making dim sum at home, remember that it is a meal that can be enjoyed at any time of the day. Dim sum items are now appearing on hors d’oeuvres trays at cocktail parties!

The best way to make dim sum at home is to invite friends and family over to assist – everyone can get involved and all can enjoy the fruits of their labor together. Plan on spending the better part of the morning making the dim sum – and the rest of the afternoon eating!

To get started making dim sum on your own, you’ll need to make a small investment in some equipment and ingredients:

- Steamers (metal or bamboo)
- A wok with a tight-fitting lid
- Cheesecloth
- Parchment paper
- Rolling pin
- Non-stick skillet
- Assortment of pretty dishes for presentation
- Tea pot with strainer
- Small tea cups
- Chopsticks

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Steamed Pork and Shrimp Dumplings (Siu Mai)

Makes 24 dumplings

8 dried shiitake mushrooms
2 ounces dried baby shrimp
12 ounces ground pork
2 teaspoons corn starch
2 tablespoons sesame oil
1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
1 tablespoon rice wine
1 green onion, minced
1 teaspoon white pepper
1 package round siu mai wrappers
½ cup cornstarch slurry
¼ cup minced carrot, optional for garnish

In a small bowl, soak the mushrooms in ½ cup of warm water for 30 minutes, or until softened. Drain and squeeze dry, reserving the soaking liquid. Cut off the stems and mince the caps.

In a food processor, chop the dried shrimp into a fine powder. In a medium-sized bowl, add the minced mushrooms, dried shrimp powder, ground pork, cornstarch, sesame oil, dark soy sauce, rice wine, green onions and pepper. Mix to combine. If the mixture seems dry, add a teaspoon of the mushroom soaking liquid until the consistency is right. The mixture should hold together in a moist ball, much like a meatball. Cover with plastic wrap and allow the mixture to sit in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Place one round siu mai wrapper on your work surface. Lightly brush the cornstarch slurry around the outside edge of the wrapper. Put about a tablespoon of the filling in the center of the wrapper. Gather up the edges all around to form a cup-shape. Surround the dumping using your thumb and index finger – create a circle by pinching the fingertips of your thumb and index finger together (the universal “A-OK” sign). Hug the dumpling sides firmly using the “A-OK” sign and tap the bottom of the dumpling lightly on your work surface to flatten the bottom. Garnish the dumpling by placing a small ¼-teaspoon sized amount of the minced carrot in the center of the filling. Place the dumpling into one of steamer baskets. Repeat the process with the remaining wrappers and filling.

Set up a steamer and bring the water to boil. Steam the dumplings for 12 minutes over high heat, replenishing the wok with boiling water if necessary between batches. Transfer the dumplings to a serving plate. Serve hot.

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Potstickers

Makes 36 pieces

3 cups finely shredded napa cabbage
1 tablespoon kosher salt
½ pound ground turkey
2 tablespoons peeled ginger, finely minced
1 scallion, finely diced
3 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons rice wine
½ teaspoons sugar
1 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 package potsticker wrappers
2 tablespoons peanut or vegetable oil
1 recipe Soy Vinegar dip (recipe follows)

In a large bowl, toss the napa cabbage with the salt and let it sit for 30 minutes, or until the cabbage has wilted. Rinse the cabbage, then squeeze out as much water as possible. Preheat the oven to 200°F.

In a large bowl, mix together the turkey, ginger, scallions, soy sauce, rice wine and sesame oil. Mix in the cabbage. Refrigerate the mixture for at least 20 minutes, or up to 2 hours.

On a lightly floured board, lay down one potsticker wrapper. Place one tablespoon of filling in the center of the wrapper. Bring the edges of the wrapper together, moisten the edges with a dab of water, and pleat one edge seven times before pressing the edges together, creating a pocket. Gently tap the potsticker on the board, creating a flat bottom with the ridge of pleats on top. The potstickers should be standing straight up. Set the finished potsticker on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Repeat the process with the remaining wrappers and filling.

Heat a skillet over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of oil and swirl to coat the pan. When the oil is almost smoking, arrange half of the potstickers in the skillet as close to one another as possible without letting them touch. Pan-fry for 2-3 minutes, checking frequently to make sure they are not burning. Reduce the heat if the bottoms are browning too quickly.

Carefully pour ½ cup water into the skillet. Cover, and reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes, or until most of the water has evaporated. Uncover and raise the heat back to medium-high and cook for 2-3 minutes, or until all of the water has evaporated and the bottoms of the potstickers are brown and crisp.

Transfer the potstickers, brown-side up, to a serving plate. Keep the potstickers warm in the oven while making the second batch. Serve hot with soy vinegar dip.

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Soy Vinegar Dip

Makes ½ cup

¼ cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons rice vinegar, or black vinegar
2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon scallion (green part only), sliced paper thin

In a small saucepan, combine the soy sauce, rice vinegar, sugar and 2 tablespoons of water. Heat over low heat for 1 minutes or until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat and transfer to a small bowl for dipping. Sprinkle in the scallions.

Sweet Chili Dipping Sauce

Makes approximately 2 cups

½ cup seasoned rice wine vinegar
¼ cup sugar
½ cup Mae Ploy Sweet Asian chili sauce
½ red bell pepper, cut into ¼-inch dice
½ yellow bell pepper, cut into ¼-inch dice

In a small saucepan, combine vinegar and sugar, and heat until sugar is dissolved. Stir in the chili sauce and peppers. Remove from heat and set aside to cool. Process the sauce in a blender until smooth. Pour the sauce into a serving bowl.

The dipping sauce can be served warm or at room temperature.

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Crab Rangoons

Makes 24 pieces

- 1/2 pound cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 pound fresh crab meat, cartilage removed, picked through and squeezed
- 1 green onion, finely minced
- 1-1/2 teaspoons finely minced cilantro
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 package fresh won ton wrappers
- 1 large egg, for egg wash
- 1 quart canola oil, for deep frying
- 1 tablespoons kosher salt for garnish
- 1 recipe Sweet Chili Dipping Sauce (recipe follows)

In a medium bowl, combine the cream cheese, crabmeat, green onion, cilantro, garlic and Worcestershire sauce. Mix in salt and pepper and adjust to taste.

On a flat surface, lay down one won ton wrapper. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush the edges of the won ton with the egg wash. Place a teaspoon of the crab filling in the middle of the won ton wrapper. Fold the won ton wrapper up by bringing the opposite corners together and sealing the seams to make an "X." Repeat with the remaining won ton wrappers and filling.

Pour the canola oil into a wok or Dutch oven and heat to 375°F. Deep fry one crab Rangoon to test for temperature – adjust the heat as necessary. Fry the remaining Rangoons until brown and crispy, about 2-3 minutes. Drain Rangoons on paper towels and sprinkle with salt.

Serve hot with the dipping sauce.

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Bubble Tea Drink

Makes 1 drink

2-3 tablespoons cooked tapioca pearls, recipe follows
1 cup crushed ice, divided
1 tablespoon simple syrup, recipe follows
½ cup dark tea, such as strongly brewed Darjeeling tea
½ cup fruit juice of your choice

In a 16-ounce glass, add the tapioca pearls and ½ cup crushed ice. In a separate drink shaker, add the simple syrup, remaining ice, dark tea and fruit juice. Shake vigorously to combine and strain into the glass. Serve with a large-diameter boba straw.

Cooking Tapioca Pearls for Bubble Tea

Makes enough for approximately 8 - 10 servings

1 cup tapioca pearls
8 cups water

In a large stockpot, boil the water. When boiling, add the tapioca pearls while stirring constantly to prevent them from sticking to the bottom of the pot. Cover and boil for 25 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the tapioca sit for another 30 minutes.

Drain and rinse the pearls under cold running water. Pour the pearls into a container and cover the pearls with simple syrup to keep until serving. Do not refrigerate. Pearls will keep for 3-4 days before turning too mushy.

Simple Syrup

Makes 1 quart

2 cups water
2 cups sugar

In a saucepan over high heat, add the water and sugar together. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Bring the mixture to a boil and turn off the heat. Allow it to cool before using.