

Steamed pork and prawn dumplings

These open-faced steamed dumplings are traditionally made with minced pork and wrapped with wonton pastry. Known as *siu mai*, meaning 'cook and sell dumplings', they're said to be from Inner Mongolia originally, but the Cantonese have made them remarkably delicious.

Siu mai are easy to make, but you need to create their characteristic 'bounce'. To achieve this, run-of-the-mill yum cha places tend to use lots of pork fat, which, to me, is unhealthy and unpleasant. I like to use a ratio of 80 per cent lean meat to 20 per cent fat so that the dumplings don't taste dry. Good yum cha restaurants use a combination of pork and prawns in the filling to create the bounce effect, as I have done here. Uncooked *siu mai* dumplings can be frozen for up to 2 weeks.

25–30 square wonton wrappers
2 tablespoons finely chopped carrot

Filling

2 dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked in hot water until softened
300 g (10½ oz) pork belly, coarsely chopped
180 g (6½ oz) peeled uncooked prawns, coarsely chopped
80 g (2¾ oz) water chestnuts, chopped
2 tablespoons light soy sauce
1½ tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine
2 teaspoons sesame oil
2 tablespoons finely chopped ginger
1 spring onion (scallion), thinly sliced
1 egg white
2 tablespoons potato flour

To make the filling, squeeze the excess water from the mushrooms, discard the stems and finely chop the caps. Combine the mushrooms in a large bowl with the remaining ingredients, season with salt and pepper and mix well. (Dim sum chefs tend to stir the mixture in one direction 20 times.) Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set aside for 20 minutes to marinate.

Place a teaspoonful of filling in the centre of each wrapper. Bring up the sides and gently squeeze to hold in the filling. Smooth the top of the filling with a knife and gently tap the bottoms of the dumplings on the bench so they stand upright. Top each dumpling with a pinch of carrot.

Line a bamboo steamer with baking paper and make a few tiny slits to allow the steam to rise through. Or lightly brush the steamer with oil. Steam the dumplings in batches for 8–10 minutes or until cooked through. Serve at once.

Hong Kong Food City by Tony Tan (Murdoch Books, £20). Photography by Greg Elms.