

80 Diapers' Beef Jiaozi

1 lb ground beef

½ large onion, finely chopped

2 inches ginger root, finely minced

1 t garlic, finely minced

1 t salt

2 T soy sauce

2 T sesame oil (or if you don't have any, soy oil)

3 c all purpose flour

1 c (plus a bit) cold water

Combine flour and enough water to make a fairly stiff dough. Knead dough for 2-3 minutes. Dough should be smooth, very elastic and dry enough to roll without sticking too much. Let the dough rest 15 minutes while you make the filling

In another bowl, thoroughly combine all remaining ingredients using a wooden spoon, mixer or Ayi's preferred method, your hands. Cover and let rest while you roll the dough.

Tear off rounded tablespoons of dough and roll out very thin (1/8 inch) circles about 3 inches in diameter on floured board or counter. To make it easier, you can also roll out the dough like cookie dough and use a 3-4 inch biscuit cutter to cut perfect circles. (Again, don't tell Ayi.)

Place 1 rounded teaspoon of meat mixture in the center of each circle. Don't overfill! Now comes the tricky bit. You don't want to simply create a half circle, you want your dumplings to have a distinctive shape. The reason dumplings are considered to be good luck for CNY is that their shape resembles that of an old-fashioned Chinese coin purse, so they are believed to bring prosperity in the New Year.



To create this shape, fold the dough over the filling and pinch together the center of the circle. Do not press the edges together. Instead, fold the edges in to create an arched shape to the dough between the edge and the center, like this:

One side is "flat" while the other bumps out. You should see the filling through the opening.

Repeat on both sides, then pinch once more in the middle of the arch, so your jiaozi looks like this:

Your dumpling should have two "ears" on each side.

Now seal up the ears, creating pleats where each ear is folded over and sealed. Your finished dumplings should "stand up" instead of laying flat because of the pleats.



Now comes the moment of truth. Do you want northern jiaozi or southern jiaozi? Beijing or Shanghai? These are serious decisions.

Americans tend to cook their dumplings the Shanghai way, using a fry/steam combination that yields a sticky, slightly crunchy wrapper which is why many people call them potstickers.

Beijingren prefer their dumplings boiled, and will look scornfully on Americans who don't know better than to fry their dumplings. (I speak from experience.) Try both ways and see what you prefer, but if you want to have an authentic Hui (Beijing Muslim) style jiaozi experience, I recommend boiling.

Dumplings cook fast! Bring a large wide pot to a rolling boil, and quickly slip 10-12 jiaozi into the water using a slotted spoon or spider strainer (a great investment if you are going to make a lot of dumplings.)

Reduce heat to medium and cook jiaozi at a slow boil for about 5 minutes. Jiaozi will sink to begin with, and you need to stir very gently to make sure they don't stick to the bottom of the pot, but as they cook they will float to the surface.

After 5 minutes, skim the dumplings out with your strainer or slotted spoon and let them drain for one minute in a colander over a plate (so they don't get soggy). Start the next batch of dumplings and move the draining ones to a plate or platter for serving.

Serve dumplings hot with Chinese black vinegar for dipping.