

THE NOM WAH COOKBOOK

RECIPES AND STORIES FROM
100 YEARS AT NEW YORK CITY'S ICONIC
DIM SUM RESTAURANT

WILSON TANG
WITH JOSHUA DAVID STEIN

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THINGS YOU'LL NEED

HARDWARE

Dim sum is meant to be both easy to make and easy to eat. There's not a ton of kitchen stuff you'll need for any of these recipes—no immersion circulator or specialized gadget that cubes a melon and flays a fish in a single swipe. But it is a non-Western cooking vernacular, and there are a few things that will make your overall experience a zillion times easier. The good news is—Chinese people in general and dim sum cooks in particular being flinty and resourceful—these few tools can be used for nearly everything. I've seen kitchens where they are nearly the *only* utensils. Those are often the best kitchens.

A WOK: Featured in the majority of bad puns in strip mall Chinese joints, the wok is also one of China's greatest culinary exports. First used by the Mongols two thousand years ago, the wok is a large circular pan—*wok* is Cantonese for “cooking pot” or “pan”—that gets super hot super fast. The best woks are thin and made of cast-iron or steel. Traditionally, they've got a round bottom, but a flat bottom is good too, especially for American stoves. (Chinese stoves often have an opening in which the wok sits, bringing it even closer to the flame.)

In terms of size, I mean woks can get crazy big. The woks we use at Nom Wah are 32 inches in diameter. But don't worry, I'm not tryna monopolize your kitchen space. For at-home use, a 12-inch or a 16-inch wok will be just fine. The wok should be big enough for you to toss whatever is inside it around without the ingredients going over the edge like some bad-luck kid in a poorly designed waterslide.

THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH A WOK:

- You can steam in it.
- You can stir-fry in it.
- You can stew in it.
- You can boil in it.
- You can use it as a big bowl.

A WOK LID: This is especially useful for steaming, obviously. Get an aluminum one with a little wooden knob on top.

A WOK RING: If you're going to use the traditional round-bottomed wok, you'll also need a wok ring or wok stand. It is exactly what it sounds like and sits on your stovetop.

A WOK CHUAN: Due to the curved nature of the wok, a traditional flat spatula is an awkward fit. The harmonious curves of a wok chuan—or wok spatula—nestle in cutely to the curves. There's also such a thing as a wok spoon, but a wok spatula is sufficiently shovel-like to do double duty.

A SPIDER: As you'll see in the following pages, dim sum is mostly about submerging dim sum things in a hot liquid (oil or water) or shrouding them in hot vapors (steam). A spider, a long-handled mesh spoon with which you can remove dim sum things from water or steam, will be your friend here.

A STEAMER: There are many ways to improvise a steamer, but why go MacGyver when a good stainless steel, or bamboo, steamer basket is about \$7 and fits in most pots, including a wok? But if you don't want

to buy one, we'll teach you how to improvise.

A COTTON KITCHEN TOWEL: Many woks have long bamboo or metal handles. Traditional woks from Canton, however, have two looped handles on either side. They get crazy hot. Unless you're an OG like Wun Gaw who just grabs them like a maniac, you'll want to protect yourself with a folded-up kitchen towel.

A CHINESE CLEAVER: In the hands of a dim sum chef, a Chinese cleaver is a thing of beauty. It can be used for everything from hacking apart a full-on suckling pig to chopping gai lan (Chinese broccoli). What you're looking for is a stainless-steel blade with some weight in it. Most traditional cleavers are rectangular with a heavy heel, though new cleavers tend to be slightly lighter with an angled spine. Whichever you choose, keep your knife like you keep yourself: looking sharp.

THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH A CLEAVER:

- You can chop through bone.
- You can slice with it.
- You can use the side of it to smash stuff.
- You can use it as a shovel.
- You can use it as a teaspoon.
- Or a tablespoon.
- Or two.

PANTRY

Look, no one has unlimited kitchen space, not at the restaurant, not at home, and certainly not in Chinatown, where the apartments are the size of air bubbles. Yet to properly cook dim sum there are a few key pantry ingredients you'd do well to purchase. For the most part, they last a long time and, in the Chinese way, do double, sometimes triple, duty. Yeah, you can get all of them from Amazon and have them delivered to your door within twenty-four hours, but I'd suggest finding your local Asian grocery store and going there. You'll meet new people. You'll see new things. C'mon, it's good for you to be out and about.

DARK SOY SAUCE: Get yourself a bottle of lou cau, or dark soy sauce. Less salty than its lighter cousin, we use this mostly to add color to dishes like egg fried rice and pork belly casserole. Our preferred brand is Pearl River Bridge Superior Dark Soy Sauce.

LIGHT SOY SAUCE: This is your workhorse soy sauce, endower of salty flavor, marinator of meats, serenader of vegetables. It's what olive oil is to Italian food or butter is to the French. "Light" here indicates color, not level of sodium or anything. (In fact, light soy sauce is saltier than dark.) Kikkoman brand is just fine, though be aware that since Kikkoman is known for their light soy sauce, the label won't say "light." It'll just say soy

sauce.

TOASTED SESAME OIL: One of the earliest known crop oils, toasted sesame oil has a wonderfully nutty flavor and hardly ever turns rancid. We use Kadoya toasted sesame oil, the gold standard.

CHICKEN POWDER: A descendent of chicken bouillon—which can also be used in a pinch—chicken powder is a flavor-rich powdered stock. We use Hong Kong's Lee Kum Kee chicken powder, the OG stuff, though Knorr works well too.

FERMENTED BLACK BEANS: Odiferous and complex fermented black beans, called *dau si*, have been made in China since 200 BC. They are too intense to eat alone yet are wonderfully umami-rich companions to meats like spareribs and chicken feet. Get the kind in the cool yellow container with ginger called Yang Jiang.

MSG: Yeah, you'll see a lot of MSG in these recipes. Why? Mostly because we got tired of writing out monosodium glutamate. Are you concerned? Don't be. It's true, MSG was an invented thing. It was invented by a Japanese food scientist named Kikunae Ikeda in 1908 as a sort of distillate of kombu, the umami-rich kelp we call *haidai* in Chinese. But you know what else is also invented? Air-conditioning. Also cars, Honeycrisp apples, and Diet Coke. That doesn't stop anyone, does it?

Basically, MSG is a flavor enhancer. It's like a bright yellow highlighter for your taste buds. It's in nearly every American snack food from Doritos to Chick-fil-A sandwiches. As an owner of a dim sum restaurant, I've had to hear about "Chinese restaurant syndrome," the dubious claim that MSG causes headaches and other symptoms, for years. But there's been no scientific evidence to establish a connection, except, I guess, outdated and offensive tropes about cheap Chinese food.

That being said, in none of these recipes is MSG a necessary ingredient. Your favorite book is still your favorite book even without the highlighting. The prose is just as tasty, though your favorite lines might be harder to find.

OYSTER SAUCE: A condiment made not for oysters but out of them, oyster sauce was invented by accident—like penicillin!—in 1888 by Lee Kum Sheung, founder of Lee Kum Kee, after he overcooked the oysters at his Hong Kong oyster stall. The dark sauce makes every noodle, every rice roll, better.

SHAOXING WINE: Often called Chinese cooking wine, Shaoxing is made with fermented rice and tastes a little like a dry sherry. As with all cooking wines, get yourself something you'd drink straight. I like Pagoda Huadiao brand—just make sure you get the kind without salt.

RICE WINE VINEGAR: Less acidic than

Western white vinegar, rice wine vinegar (also called simply rice vinegar) is delicately flavored and slightly sweet. Along with soy sauce and toasted sesame oil, it makes up the flavorful underpainting of many dishes.

AJI-MIRIN: Like Shaoxing, aji-mirin is a cooking wine made with rice. Unlike Shaoxing, it's sweeter and a bit more complex and actually hails from Japan. Kikkoman has a pretty good and widely available aji-mirin, under the name Kikkoman Manjo Aji-Mirin.

RICE: There are two types of rice: glutinous (or sticky) and regular. Buy a pound of each. We use sticky rice for sticky rice and Chinese sausage; we use regular rice for fried rice and as an accompaniment to most of the big format dishes.

RICE FLOUR: Just as there are two types of rice: regular and glutinous, there are two types of rice flour: regular and glutinous. We use regular rice flour as a base for many of our steamed rice dishes from turnip cakes to rice rolls. (Glutinous rice flour, which turns chewy when fried, is used often for thickening sauces and in desserts but isn't used as frequently.) The flours look identical, which can be confusing. We use Erawan brand from Thailand. The regular rice flour has the red label.

CORNSTARCH: Though flavorless itself, cornstarch is an integral ingredient to mastering the stir-fry. Not only does it seal the flavors into the food being fried, but it

adds body to the sauce and ensures an even coating.

POTATO STARCH: Unlike cornstarch, potato starch is a root starch. Though one can be substituted for the other in a pinch, we prefer potato starch for frying and cornstarch for thickening due to their varying properties over high heat.

DRIED SHRIMP: These small, salted, and sun-dried shrimps are the Allen Iversons of dim sum. They're nibble-sized umami bombs that have a disproportional impact on your quality of life. Make sure you get dried shrimp that are bright orange, not faded peach.

DRIED SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS: Along with dried shrimp, dried shiitake mushrooms are the secret weapon in the dim sum kitchen. Similarly rich with umami, the mushrooms—also called dried black mushrooms—find their way into soups, fillings, rice dishes, anything that would benefit from some texture, body, and backbone. Much easier to find and obviously with a longer shelf life than fresh shiitake mushrooms, these must be hydrated before use. To do that, just soak the things in warm water for 15 to 20 minutes, until the mushrooms are tender. Remove, pat dry, and they're ready to use.

CHINESE SAUSAGE (LAP CHEONG): Lap cheong refers to all sausage from China, so it's a little like saying you should have

charcuterie in your pantry if you're going to cook Italian. But the type of Chinese sausage most often used in Cantonese cooking is a very dry, very sweet variety that also happens to be called lap cheong. It's an air-cured sausage made with pork and seasoned with, among other things, liquor. The type of liquor—whether it is rice wine, rose wine, or sorghum liquor—determines the sweetness and character of the sausage. You'll find packages of the stuff in most Asian groceries. We get ours from Sun Ming Jan on Hester Street. It makes cameos in the sticky rice with Chinese sausage and the turnip cake, but I also sometimes just dice it up and fold it into eggs when I make omelets for my kids.

SAMBAL OELEK: True, sambal oelek hails from Indonesia, not China, but we're huge fans of this spicy-as-hell paste made with ground fresh chili peppers and vinegar. Some sambal oelek contains additional flavors, but we prefer Huy Fong's, which has nothing but vinegar, peppers, and salt.

PICKLED RED CHILI: Another endower of heat and spice comes from Guizhou, in south-central China, a province that combines the heat-seeking Szechuan style with a love of all things sour. This is best embodied in these pickled red chilis. We use the Cock on the Mountain Top Brand, often shortened to the Cock Brand, which makes me laugh every time.

CHILI OIL: The final spice agent from Guizhou is chili oil, a mixture of star anise, cinnamon, bay leaves, chili flakes, Szechuan peppercorns, and a bunch of other spices suspended in oil. We use Lao Gan Ma's Spicy Chili Crisp or Dynasty Hot Chili Oil. You should put this on everything.

FRIED GARLIC: Though relatively easy to make yourself, keep a jar of fried garlic on hand in those cases when just a sprinkle is needed as a garnish. It's available at most Asian grocery stores. We use the Aroy-D brand, but Maesri is a good alternative.

THE BIG THREE TECHNIQUES

As an outgrowth of its origins as roadside teahouse fare, most traditional dim sum dishes are steamed. A good number these days are also pan-fried or stir-fried (the deep fryer didn't really enter the dim sum kitchen until the twentieth century). Much of the action happens in the wok, which, as noted, is a versatile tool.

In terms of techniques we use, there are two that loom large. We steam. We pan-fry. (We also deep-fry, bake, and roast, but much more rarely.) Instead of writing these instructions over and over again, I'm putting the basic techniques here. The method below presupposes you have a wok, a skillet, and a steamer, which, if you followed our advice, you'll have already purchased. However, the logic of the techniques holds true even with a large lidded pot to replace the wok and a sheet pan to replace the steamer.

HOW TO STEAM

Steaming is perhaps what sets dim sum apart from all other dumpling-loving kitchens of the world. We steam everything at Nom Wah in an industrial Vulcan steamer. At home, I recommend steaming in a wok. Steaming times vary depending on the density and size of what you are steaming. But the general

setup to steam in a wok is as follows.

Fill the wok with enough water to come up to the lower rim of the steamer but not so much the waterline is above the food bed. Line the bottom of the steamer with paper or a lotus leaf or something so that the fiddly bits won't fall through the cracks. (If steaming dumplings or bao, you won't need to line the steamer.) Place whatever needs steaming in the basket, leaving ample room between items. Bring water to boil and steam for the desired duration. If you need more water—water tends to evaporate—add boiling, not cold, water so as not to stop the steaming.

If you *do* want to DIY it, just use a plate in a pot. All you need is tinfoil and a plate that fits in your pot. Fill a pot with ½ an inch of water. Then make a sort of tripod out of tinfoil by forming three golf ball-sized balls and placing them in the bottom of the pot, making sure their tops rest above the waterline. Rest the plate on the tinfoil, cover, and steam. This method is especially useful when making rice rolls, in which you'll be using a cake pan instead of the plate.

You can put anything in the steamer as long as it isn't so small that it would tumble through the holes into the roiling waters below.

HOW TO PAN-FRY

For most ingredients that are pan-fried, it's best to use a nonstick pan. In the case of dumplings, we pan-fry *after* we steam, in order to imbue them with that pleasingly crunchy, slightly sweet wrapper. To prepare, heat neutral oil over medium-high heat in a large nonstick pan until shimmering. Place steamed dumplings, fold to the side, in the pan starting from the center outward. Turn after a minute, let brown for another minute, then remove to a paper towel-lined plate when golden brown.

HOW TO STIR-FRY IN A WOK

There's a reason that stir-frying in the wok is the ultimate station in traditional Cantonese kitchens. Woks get so blazingly hot that the difference between burned to hell and pleasingly crispy is a few milliseconds. But the wok's superpower of heat transference

is also the source of wok hei, the famous Cantonese "breath of wok," the alchemical reactions that occur between spice and noodles, protein or whatever else you've got in there at such astronomical temperatures.

The key to stir-frying in a wok is constant agitation and alacrity. Watching Wun Gaw at the wok is like standing in the pit of an F1 race. The ingredients go in with one hand while the other, hand grasping the handle, is already tossing the ingredients in graceful loops. We use stir-fry technique especially in the later chapters. It should be done in a manner of minutes. Just remember to agitate constantly.

As for the wrappers, the recipes for those and their techniques for folding or rolling are found in their relevant chapter; dumplings for dumplings, bao for bao, and rolls and rice for those too.

BASIC BAO DOUGH

MAKES 10 BUNS

What makes our buns so good is that we use a mix of yeast and baking powder as leavening agents in the dough. Many restaurants rely solely on the baking powder for leavening, but that leads to a bitter and stickier dough. Adding yeast to the mixture, however, gives the bun fluffiness.

1 teaspoon active dry yeast
1½ cups warm water
3 cups all-purpose flour
6 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons neutral oil
1½ teaspoons baking powder

IN the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment, sift the flour and sugar. Add the yeast and baking powder.

ADD the water and oil slowly while mixing on the lowest speed until a smooth dough ball forms, 1 to 2 minutes. (You can do this by hand, as well, though it will take longer.)

COVER the dough with a damp cloth and let rest for approximately 2 hours, until it doubles in size. (This is a perfect time, by the way, to make your fillings for the bao.)

TURN the dough out onto a flat surface and gently knead by hand until the dough becomes smooth again, approximately 5 minutes. If the dough is dry, add 1 to 2 teaspoons of water. Cover with a damp cloth and let rest for another 15 minutes.

WHILE the dough rests, lay out ten flattened cupcake liners (alternatively, you can cut a large piece of parchment paper into ten 4 x 4-inch squares). These are your bao coasters.

TO make the buns, roll the dough into a tube approximately 2 inches in diameter and 1½ to 2 feet long and divide it into 10 equal pieces.

REROLL each piece of dough into a disc about 4½ inches in diameter and about ¼ inch thick. They should be thicker in the center and thinner around the edges.

ADD about 2 tablespoons filling to the center of the dough and pleat the buns until they're closed on top.

SET up a steamer. Place each bun on a cupcake liner (or parchment paper square) and steam for 12 minutes until bun is firm to touch with a little bit of give. Serve immediately.

HOW TO STUFF AND CLOSE A BAO

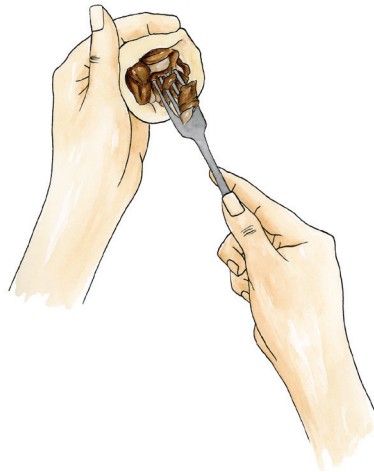
STEP 1. Hold the disc of dough in one hand.

STEP 2. Scoop 2 tablespoons of filling into the center.

STEP 3. Close the bao slightly by cupping your hand gently.

STEP 4. Using your thumb and pointer finger of the opposite hand, gather a bit of dough to form a ¼-inch-deep pleat. Press firmly to seal. Use your middle finger to gather the next pleat, then transfer that pleat to join the previous pleat between the thumb and pointer, pressing together again. Advance your fingers around the edge, gathering, pinching, and pressing, 12 to 14 pleats. As you go, use the thumb of the bao-holding hand to tuck the filling down slightly.

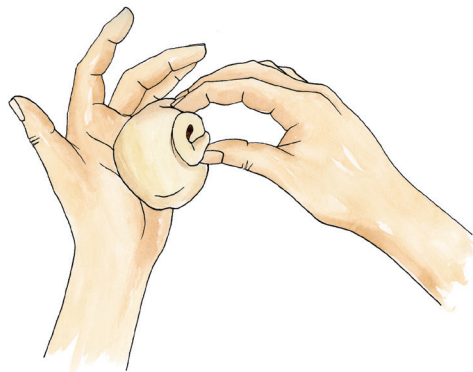
STEP 5. Once all the pleats have been gathered, twist the pleats together to help seal the bao and make it look pretty.



3



4



5

MANTAO

MAKES 15 BUNS

Mantao are the most basic of all bao. They are inchoate bao, potential bao, primordial and future bao. But they're also delicious in their own right. The keys to said deliciousness are twofold: First, add a little milk before you knead the dough, and second, make the mantao smaller than stuffed bao. Each should be about 2 inches in diameter. Mantao always reminds me of a hole-less Chinese bagel, even more so when we sprinkle Everything Bagel seasoning on top of it, as pictured.

1 teaspoon active dry yeast
 ¾ cup warm water
 3 cups all-purpose flour
 5 tablespoons sugar
 ¼ cup neutral oil
 ¼ cup whole milk
 2½ teaspoons baking powder
 1 tablespoon of Everything Bagel seasoning
 (optional—Trader Joe's makes a great one; alternatively, use 1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds, 1 teaspoon poppy seeds, 1 teaspoon fried garlic, and 1 teaspoon salt)

IN the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment, dissolve the yeast in the warm water.

SIFT the flour and sugar into a separate large bowl. Add to the yeast mixture, then add the neutral oil and milk.

MIX on the lowest speed until a smooth dough ball forms, 1 to 2 minutes. (You can

do this by hand, as well, though it will take longer.)

COVER the dough with a damp cloth and let rest for approximately 2 hours, until it doubles in size. Once rested, roll the dough out on a well-floured surface to a tube about ¼ inch thick and 18 to 24 inches long.

STARTING with the edge nearest you, roll the dough up into a cylinder, like you were forming a Cinnabon. Slice the roll lengthwise every ½ inch into 15 pieces. If you'd like to jazz up your bao, sprinkle each bun with the Everything Bagel seasoning, and press seasoning gently into dough.

SET up a steamer, add the mantao, and steam for 8 to 9 minutes until bun is firm to touch with a little bit of give. Serve immediately.

HOUSE SPECIAL ROAST PORK BUNS (CHAR SIU BAO)

MAKES 10 BUNS

As for the filling, this is just one way to use the ever-versatile char siu, which you'll also find in the Char Siu Family Meal and Char Siu Noodles. In fact, BBQ pork bao is a great way to use up leftovers after a feast. But feel free to experiment with what you put in the bao—I've made it with glass noodles (carb on carb!) or leftover ground beef at home—but be aware that a too-liquidy filling will render your bao soggy, and no one wants a soggy bun.

1 tablespoon neutral oil
 ¾ cup finely chopped white onion
 2 tablespoons sugar
 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
 3 tablespoons oyster sauce
 4 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
 4 teaspoons dark soy sauce
 3 cups chopped char siu
 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 2 tablespoons water
 1 recipe basic bao dough

HEAT the neutral oil in a wok over medium-high heat until sizzling. Add the onion and stir-fry for 1 minute or until onions become translucent. In a separate small bowl, whisk together the sugar, light soy sauce, oyster sauce, toasted sesame oil, and dark soy sauce until fully combined. Turn the heat down on your wok to medium-low and add the char siu and sauce mixture. Cook, stirring

on medium low heat until the mixture starts to bubble up and the sugar dissolves, approximately 5 minutes.

IN a separate bowl, combine the cornstarch and water to create a slurry—this will act as a thickener.

WHILE still bubbling, add in the slurry and stir immediately so that it is well incorporated. Stirring constantly, bring back to a boil/bubble then remove from heat.

SET aside to cool (If you make the filling ahead of time, cover and refrigerate to prevent it from drying out).

FILL the bao. Set up a steamer, add the bao, and steam for 12 to 15 minutes until bun is firm to touch with a little bit of give. Serve immediately.

VEGETABLE BAO

MAKES 10 BUNS

The traditional Cantonese diet was extremely veggie forward. Meat was expensive and most people were poor, so . . . there you have it. In the United States, however, for a variety of weird and sordid reasons, meat is often cheaper than vegetables—so dim sum tends to be heavy on the meat. Especially for first-gen Chinese immigrants, the ability to eat meat at nearly every meal was an indicator that they had finally made it. So this vegetable bao came not from Wun Gaw at Nom Wah OG but from Julie Cole at our more contemporary offshoot, Nom Wah Nolita. Pretty early on we realized that if we were going to have a sustainable lunch business, we needed to offer some veg options. It was funny to return to the Cantonese eating habits of a hundred years ago to find inspiration for modern fast casual, but time is a circle, blah blah blah, and you can't argue with the pure living satisfaction of sautéed gai lan with crunchy bits of bamboo shoot.

NOTE: *You'll need to make the filling the night before you make your bao.*

½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for blanching
 2 pounds Chinese broccoli (gai lan)
 2 tablespoons neutral oil
 ½ cup canned bamboo shoots, minced
 ½ cup minced dried bean curd (also called tofu skin)
 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
 1 teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon MSG
 1 recipe Basic Bao Dough

BRING a large stockpot of salted water to a boil.

MEANWHILE, in a large bowl, make an ice bath by filling the bowl halfway with ice and covering the ice with cold water.

BLANCH the broccoli in the boiling water, without stirring, for 5 to 10 seconds, until greens become vibrant. Use a slotted spoon to carefully transfer the broccoli to the ice-water bath. Stir the broccoli in the water to make sure it is evenly cooled, then transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain.

ONCE the broccoli is drained and cooled, chop it into ¼-inch pieces and place in a medium bowl. Drain any excess liquid from the bowl.

HEAT 1 tablespoon of the neutral oil in a medium sauté pan. Add the bamboo shoots and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until some color has developed. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain.

ADD the bamboo shoots to the bowl with the broccoli. Add the dried bean curd, remaining 1 tablespoon neutral oil, toasted sesame oil, sugar, salt, and MSG. Toss the contents of the bowl until fully combined. Cover and refrigerate overnight or for up to 10 hours to firm up the filling.

WHEN you're ready to use the filling, remove from the refrigerator, drain off any excess liquid, and stir. Fill the bao. Set up a steamer, add the bao, and steam for 12 to 15 minutes until bun is firm to touch with a little bit of give. Serve immediately.

GAU ZI: These are your go-to dumplings. Originally from Northern China, they're bite-sized packages made with a thin wheat wrapper and are very versatile. They can be steamed, in which case they emerge almost silky with a light yellow hue, or pan-fried, in which case they are darker and partially encrusted in a delicious crunchy wrapper.

WRAPPER USED: Shanghai-style circular wonton wrapper. We prefer the Twin Marquis brand.

WONTON: The line between what is a gau zi and what is a wonton is blurry. Basically, a wonton is gau zi made with a thinner Hong Kong-style square wrapper, instead of circular Shanghai-style ones and with a slightly different folding mechanic. Less technical in nature, the word *wonton* stems from "hundun," or primordial chaos.

WRAPPER USED: Hong Kong-style square wonton wrapper.

SIU MAI: These small dumplings are like gau zi, if you left them in the dryer too long and the wrapper shrank like a wool sweater. Most common siu mai are pork siu mai, but we make a variety, including chicken and shrimp.

WRAPPER USED: Hong Kong-style circular wonton wrapper.

HAR GOW: Made with a translucent crystal dumpling skin and delicately folded, har gow are basically tricked-out shrimp gau zi with a few extra folds.

WRAPPER USED: Homemade.

XIAO LONG BAO: For my money, the most impressive of all dumplings but, sadly, actually bao. These are broth-filled purses that are then steamed.

WRAPPER USED: Homemade.

HOW TO MAKE DUMPLINGS

How to make dumplings means mostly how to fold dumplings, not so much how to make the dough. At Nom Wah, like literally everywhere else, we use store-bought dumpling skins. Though I've included some recipes for dumpling skins, only masochists make their own wrappers. Don't be precious. Go buy some. We get ours from Twin Marquis, a noodle-and-wrapper company that started in Chinatown in 1989 but has since expanded to Bushwick and New Jersey and other places. Their stuff is very gettable online and always the highest quality.

As for the folding, that you have to do yourself. Folding dumplings isn't hard, but it takes practice. I'm not talking Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000-Hour Rule. Dumpling skins come in pretty large stacks. By the end of a package, you'll be as good as you'll need to be for a feast. That said, what I'd recommend is that the first time you make dumplings, double the recipe. First dumplings are like first pancakes: wonky and uneven. Practiced dumplings are like only children: perfect, compact, punctilious creatures, labored over by loving parents

who don't let their inner lives spill out to the rest of the world but present a flawless facade, all the while containing the building pressure until they *explode* with flavor and pent-up juices.

Whether you're making har gow, gau zi, siu mai, or xiao long bao, the most important tip I can give you is don't go ham in the amount of filling you use. More isn't always better. Think of your dumplings like letters, delicious flour-based envelopes. You can't overstuff your envelope or it'll get returned to sender. Similarly, don't overstuff your dumpling or it'll break apart, spilling its filling like a thirteen-year-old, drunk on his dad's schnapps. Use a proper tablespoon,

not a heaping one, not two of one, just one proper tablespoon.

Apart from the folds, as shown in the following pages; the second variable in dumpling assembly is not to be shy about smushing together the wrapper to seal the dumplings closed. Use a bit of water on your finger if need be to moisten the dough. As dumplings cook, they have a tendency to pop open. Your seam is the weakest part, so press it hard.

DUMPLING DIPPING SAUCE

MAKES 2 CUPS

The ideal accompaniment for most dumplings is this sharp and sweet sauce. The acidity cuts the rich fattiness of the filling. Do not use it sparingly. Use it with abandon.

¾ cup light soy sauce
1 cup rice wine vinegar
3½ tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil

PLACE all ingredients in a small bowl. Whisk together until well mixed and the sugar dissolved. Dumpling Dipping Sauce can be kept covered in the refrigerator for up to three days.

GAU ZI

Close your eyes and think of dumplings. You'll probably think of gauu zi, small golden purses that can be had, a dozen for few dollars, at any one of the many dumpling joints across the Chinatowns of the world. In fact, gauu zi are so ubiquitous that at Nom Wah we just refer to them as dumplings.

Gauu zi originated in Northern China sometime around the Han dynasty (220–206 BC) but they've been found preserved intact in tombs across China. Originally eaten during the Lunar New Year to bring good luck—their shape vaguely recalls the silver bars then used as currency, although, let's face it, when you're poor everything looks like money—now gauu zi are eaten year-round all over the world. They're among the easiest of dumplings to make and the most versatile.

HOW TO MAKE GAU ZI

WRAPPER: Shanghai-style circular wonton wrapper

DAMPEN a towel under which to keep the rest of the dumpling wrappers while you work.

PREPARE a parchment-lined baking sheet on which to store the already prepared dumplings.

STEP 1. Place 1½ teaspoons of filling in the center of each dumpling wrapper.

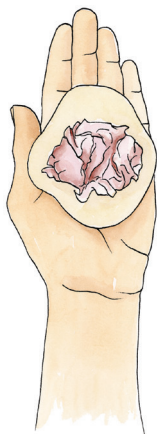
STEP 2. Fold the dumpling into a half-moon shape.

STEP 3. Hold the dumpling, seam-side up, between your thumb and index finger.

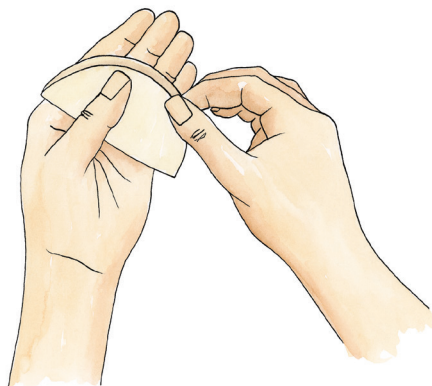
STEP 4. Use the index finger and thumb of your other hand to pinch a section of the dumpling edge and pull it toward the web of the holding hand to make a small pleat.

STEP 5. Repeat around the edge of the dumpling until you have between 6 and 8 pleats.

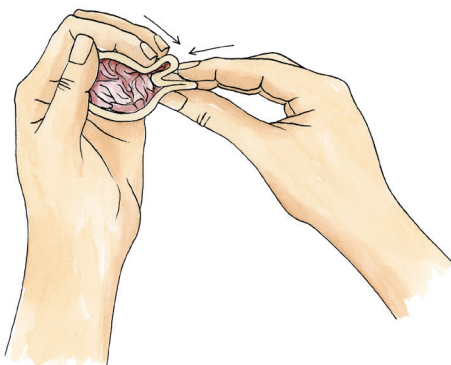
MAKE AHEAD: Dumplings can be kept in the refrigerator for up to four days or frozen for up to three months.



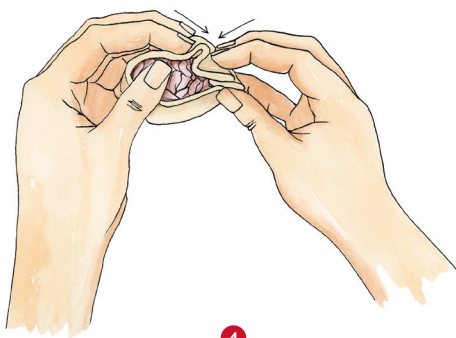
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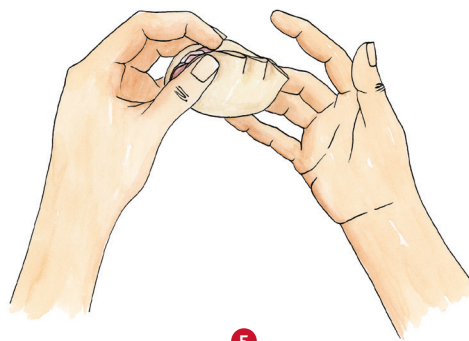
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THE THREE MASTER FILLINGS

Much of dim sum is predicated on the three Master Fillings. It's time you meet them. (My friend Calvin calls these the Mother Meats, but . . . gross.)

Once you have a working knowledge of master fillings, you can start building on them. It's simple, like grammar or car wash options or Pachelbel's Canon: theme and variation. If you take the Pork Master Filling and add chives, you get pork and chive dumplings. Shrimp and snow pea leaf dumplings contain Shrimp Master Filling with snow pea shoots added. You get it.

PORK MASTER FILLING

MAKES FILLING FOR 20 DUMPLINGS

Pork Master Filling is the spiritual center of dumplings. It is contained in the heart of many dumplings, like magic in the finger of *Willow*. It gives that good good dim sum flavor. It is made primarily of pork. And, therefore, it is known as the Pork Master Filling. Pity the pig—easily kept, cheaply fed, and delicious—for these characteristics have made it a staple in Chinese cooking from Neolithic times to the present. When Uncle Wally throws down at Tong On Association, it's the whole suckling pig, borne by four guys on its platter, that comes out of the kitchen. When I shut down the restaurant and take everyone out for karaoke and dinner, we're eating pork. Pig makes the party at Nom Wah too, though more often than not it comes in filling form.

This filling isn't, of course, *just* pork. In the Chinese pantry, pork has a best amigo: shrimp. Shrimp is like the Amos to Pork's Boris. Shrimp is the Piggie to the Pork's Elephant. And it's easy to see why. Like pigs, shrimp are easy to raise, easy to catch, easy to feed, and delicious. Guangzhou cuisine is full of shrimp, presented in an astonishing array: there is shrimp paste, whole shrimp, shrimp powder, shrimp chopped up and rolled into balls, shrimp—as is here the case—as pork wingman.

Pork Master Filling also has a bunch of other delicious things in it, like chicken powder and dried shiitake mushrooms (dung gu). The former endows the filling with Ineffable Chicken Presence. The latter gives the filling body, texture, and, because the mushrooms are smoked before they're dried, a wonderful burst of umami.

3 dried shiitake mushrooms
10 ounces pork collar, roughly chopped
8 ounces small shrimp, peeled and roughly chopped
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1½ teaspoons sugar
1 tablespoon chicken powder
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

SOAK the mushrooms in hot water for 20 to 30 minutes, until tender.

REMOVE, pat dry, then roughly chop. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and stir well to incorporate.

MAKE AHEAD: The filling can be kept refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for 3 months.

SHRIMP MASTER FILLING

MAKES FILLING FOR 20 DUMPLINGS

Now, not everyone eats pork. For them we have two declensions of Pork Master Filling, each with their individual charms. The first, Shrimp Master Filling, replaces the pork with cuttlefish. (Cuttlefish is the pork of the ocean.) The result is a wonderfully oceanic but not at all fish-fishy flavor with a unique flavor that is synonymous with dim sum.

4 ounces cuttlefish or squid, roughly chopped

8 ounces small whole shrimp, peeled

1 tablespoon neutral oil

¼ teaspoon ground white pepper

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon chicken powder

2 tablespoons potato starch

COMBINE all the ingredients in a blender.

Blend at high speed until sticky like grout or a paste, 3 to 5 minutes, stopping to scrape the sides of the machine as needed. Overblending the mixture will result in a filling with no chew. And chew is a good thing.

MAKE AHEAD: The filling can be kept refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for 3 months.

NO PORK NO SHRIMP MASTER FILLING

MAKES FILLING FOR 20 DUMPLINGS

No Pork No Shrimp Master Filling is another way of saying vegetarian filling. It draws its body from a pantry of woodland flora, including bamboo shoots, shiitake mushrooms, wood ear mushrooms, and a bunch of cabbage. Unlike the other fillings, which use entirely raw ingredients, you'll need to quickly stir-fry the vegetables before making the filling. The result is a startlingly fresh and wholesome filling that is both satisfying and doesn't make you want to take a nap immediately after.

2 ounces dried wood ear mushrooms
2 teaspoons neutral oil
8 ounces medium yellow napa cabbage
(about ¼ cabbage), shredded
4 fresh shiitake mushrooms, diced
1 small carrot, diced
¼ cup bamboo shoots, chopped
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon white pepper
1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine
½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
1 teaspoon cornstarch

SOAK mushrooms in hot water for 20 to 30 minutes, until tender. Remove, pat dry, and roughly chop.

HEAT the neutral oil in a wok or a large heavy skillet over high heat until hot but not smoking. Add the cabbage, mushrooms, carrot, and bamboo shoots and cook for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Add the sugar, white pepper, Shaoxing wine, and toasted sesame oil and toss for 30 seconds, or until the vegetables are beginning to soften. Add the cornstarch and toss once more to incorporate it. Cool completely before using.

MAKE AHEAD: The filling can be kept refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for 3 months.

HOUSE SPECIAL PAN-FRIED PORK DUMPLINGS

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

These are our archetypal dumplings and one of the most popular orders across the Nom Wah universe. There's really no mystery as to why: dumplings are delicious. To the extent that ours are special—and they are because it's in the name—it's due less to the dumpling form and to the Pork Master Filling. Shrimp and Pork are like the Cardi B and Offset or Kanye and Kim of dumpling filling: a sexy, deeply compatible, and wholly enviable partnership.

1 recipe Pork Master Filling
20 Shanghai-style circular wrappers
2 tablespoons neutral oil
Dumpling Dipping Sauce for serving

MAKE the dumplings according to the Gauu Zi method.

SET up a steamer. Working in batches, add the dumplings, making sure to leave 1½ inches of space between each (they expand

as they cook), and steam for for 12 to 13 minutes. Let rest for a minute or so to tighten slightly.

HEAT the neutral oil in a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the dumplings, pleat to the side, and pan-fry until golden brown, approximately 1 minute per side.

SERVE with Dumpling Dipping Sauce.

PAN-FRIED CHICKEN AND CABBAGE DUMPLINGS

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

Chicken is like pork that can fly. It is much lighter both as animal and as protein and also healthier. Among our best sellers at Nom Wah are these chicken and cabbage dumplings. The chicken gives these guys body while the cabbage gives them volume.

10 ounces skinless chicken breast, finely chopped
 6 ounces medium yellow napa cabbage (approximately $\frac{1}{5}$ cabbage), shredded
 2 slices fresh ginger, $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, diced
 2 scallions, finely chopped
 1 teaspoon salt
 1½ teaspoons sugar
 1 tablespoon chicken powder
 ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
 20 Shanghai-style circular wrappers
 2 tablespoons neutral oil
 Dumpling Dipping Sauce for serving

IN a large bowl, mix together the chicken, cabbage, ginger, and scallions until the mixture resembles a fine paste. Add the salt, sugar, chicken powder, white pepper, cornstarch, and toasted sesame oil and continue to stir for 3 to 5 minutes, until well incorporated.

MAKE the dumplings according to the Gau Zi method.

SET up a steamer. Working in batches, add the dumplings, making sure to leave 1½ inches of space between each (they expand as they cook), and steam for 12 to 13 minutes. Let rest for a minute or so to tighten slightly.

HEAT the neutral oil in a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the dumplings, pleat to the side, and pan-fry until golden brown, approximately 1 minute per side.

SERVE with Dumpling Dipping Sauce.

EDAMAME DUMPLINGS

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

In meat dumplings, the meat is a binding agent. In veggie dumplings, there is no meat, and man, are they a drag to fold, the dumpling equivalent of herding cats. The filling simply doesn't adhere. After lots of frustrated attempts at wrapping, Julie Cole, our chef at Nolita, developed this recipe. The blitzed edamame beans, fortified with xanthan gum, give the filling its body, but if you happen *not* to have xanthan gum lying around, you can forgo it, although the filling will be slightly less cohesive, or substitute with cornstarch.

MAKE AHEAD: *The filling must be prepared the day before you make the dumplings.*

10½ ounces shelled frozen edamame beans, defrosted
 3½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh Chinese chives
 2 teaspoons kosher salt
 7 ounces drained canned straw mushrooms
 ½ ounce dry vermicelli noodles, hydrated in hot water for 10 minutes and drained
 1 tablespoon sugar
 ¼ teaspoon xanthan gum (or substitute an equal amount cornstarch)
 1½ teaspoons toasted sesame oil
 3 tablespoons Szechuan chili oil
 20 round spinach dumpling wrappers (we use Twin Marquis)
 Dumpling Dipping Sauce for serving

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

PUT the edamame beans in a food processor and pulse 2 to 3 times for a very large rough chop. Transfer to a bowl.

PUT the chives in a microwave-safe bowl,

add ½ teaspoon of the salt, and stir to combine. Microwave for 30 seconds until warm. Wrap the heated chives in a kitchen towel and twist and squeeze the liquid out over the sink. Add the chives to the chopped edamame beans and mix to combine.

ADD the straw mushrooms to the food processor and pulse 2 to 3 times for a very large rough chop. Transfer to another bowl. **ROUGHLY** chop the vermicelli noodles, add them to the bowl of mushrooms, and mix to combine.

TRANSFER the edamame-chive and mushroom-vermicelli mixtures to separate strainers set over bowls. Cover each with paper towels and use any type of weight (such as a soup can) to weigh each mixture down. The weight should be something that covers the entire mixture, not a small can that covers only ¼ of it. Liquid will only

strain out of the portion that is compressed, so it all needs to be weighed down. Refrigerate for at least 10 hours and up to 24 hours.

REMOVE the mixtures from the refrigerator. Add half of the edamame-chive mixture to the mushroom-vermicelli mixture.

IN a food processor, combine the sugar, xanthan gum (or cornstarch), sesame oil, and remaining salt and process for 2 minutes until well incorporated. Add the remaining edamame-chive mixture and the chili oil. Process until the mixture forms a smooth paste.

ADD the paste to the bowl with the

edamame, chives, mushrooms, and vermicelli. Mix the filling until very well combined.

TO ASSEMBLE AND COOK THE DUMPLINGS:

MAKE the dumplings according to the Gauu Zi method.

SET up a steamer. Working in batches, add the dumplings, making sure to leave 1½ inches of space between each (they expand as they cook), and steam for 6 minutes until dumpling is glossy. Serve immediately, with Dumpling Dipping Sauce if desired.

EDAMAME DUMPLINGS IN SOUP

SERVES 4

FOR THE BROTH:

1 large Spanish onion, washed
 1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger
 2 carrots, medium, washed and cut into 1-inch slices
 1 medium daikon (about 4 ounces), cut into 1-inch slices
 2 sheets of dashi kombu (dried seaweed)
 1 small bunch fresh cilantro
 4 scallions, rinsed and dried
 2 cloves garlic, smashed with the side of a knife
 1 gram whole star anise, roughly ½ pod
 4½ teaspoons mushroom powder
 ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
 1 tablespoon light soy sauce
 1½ teaspoons rice wine vinegar
 6¼ cups cold water

FOR THE SOUP:

1 pound yu choy (also known as edible rape) or other Chinese green, thick stems peeled and trimmed
 16 Edamame Dumplings
 2 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias

TO MAKE THE BROTH:

SLICE the onion and ginger in half lengthwise. Place the onion and ginger directly on a gas burner over a high flame, peeled side down, and burn them until the flesh side is completely black. Flip and do the same on the skin side. (If you do not have a gas stovetop, you can do this over high heat in a well-oiled skillet.)

REMOVE the onion and ginger to a large pot. Add the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat to low and cook, uncovered, at a very light simmer for 2 hours.

TURN off the heat and strain through a chinois or very fine strainer. The broth is ready to use for soup.

TO MAKE THE SOUP:

HEAT the strained broth in a large pot. Add the yu choy and cook for 2 minutes, or until just softened. Divide the soup equally among 4 bowls. Add the edamame dumplings and garnish with the sliced scallions.

SWEET POTATO KALE WONTONS

MAKES 20 WONTONS

Now is a great time to talk about Calvin Eng, the young and impossibly handsome chef who opened Nom Wah Nolita with us. Like many of my friends, I met Calvin on Instagram. I don't know who DM'd whom first, but we slid into each other's lives like a letter into an envelope. Calvin grew up in Bay Ridge, the son of Toisanese immigrants. He's younger than I am, but we had very similar experiences growing up, getting dragged by his parents to Chinatown on the weekends to shop, go to Chinese school, and visit relatives. When I met Cal, he was only twenty-one, freshly graduated from Johnson & Wales University. But he was fiercely ambitious, and when we opened Nom Wah Nolita, I knew he was the guy I wanted at the helm. Cal immediately began taking traditional dim sum and putting his twist on it. A great example is this vegan dumpling, which, unlike many vegan foods, is exceptionally flavorful. The result is a marriage between a pierogi and a gauu zi and heralded tremendous things for Nom Wah Nolita.

1 tablespoon kosher salt, plus more for boiling the sweet potatoes
 2 pounds sweet potatoes
 4 ounces kale, stems removed, leaves cut into thin ribbons
 3 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
 3 cloves garlic, minced
 ¼ cup thinly sliced scallions
 3 tablespoons light soy sauce
 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
 1 tablespoon garlic powder
 2 teaspoons ground white pepper
 20 Hong Kong-style square wonton wrappers
 Dumpling Dipping Sauce for serving

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

BRING a large pot of cold salted water to a boil. Add the sweet potatoes and cook for approximately 15 minutes, until they can be easily pierced with a fork. Allow to cool slightly, then carefully remove the skins from the sweet potatoes.

IN a large bowl, combine the still-warm sweet potatoes, the kale, ginger, garlic, scallions, soy sauce, toasted sesame oil, garlic powder, salt, and white pepper. Using a potato masher, gently mash the ingredients to make a filling, leaving some small chunks. Allow to cool completely.

TO ASSEMBLE THE WONTONS:

PLACE a wonton wrapper on a clean cutting board. Place 1 teaspoon of the filling in the middle of the wrapper. Form the filling into a rectangular shape, parallel to the wrapper. Dab the edges with water and fold the wrapper in half. Gently press the wonton to remove any air between wrapper and filling. Wet the bottom of the left corner of the wrapper. Hold both corners of the wrapper and fold them to the center. Press to seal. Repeat with the remaining wrappers and filling.

PLACE dumplings on a parchment-lined baking sheet and cover with a damp kitchen towel when completed.

SET up a steamer and steam for 6 minutes. Serve immediately, with Dumpling Dipping Sauce, if desired.

CHORIZO POTATO DUMPLINGS WITH DILL CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

When we opened Nom Wah Nolita in 2016, I chose the space carefully. Not only is it a highly trafficked block just off the Bowery but the restaurant adjacent to a then-vacant corner space whose lease I also took over. The two spaces are connected by an interior hallway. Why am I talking about this again? Oh, yeah. It's because this allowed us to rent out one space for parties and events and cater from the other. And the reason that *this* piece of information matters is because one of the parties we hosted was for Adidas, which was celebrating their sponsorship of a bunch of Argentinean skateboarders. They asked Calvin to come up with some Argentinean-inspired recipes. Calvin, being a Toisanese kid from Bay Ridge, knew next to nothing about Argentinean food, but he did know how to Google. So hats off to the SEO optimization of chimichurri and chorizo, the two results that came up first in his online searches. Luckily for us, the result was insanely delicious, like an empanada that does dumplings on the DL.

FOR THE FILLING:

2 tablespoons salt, plus more for cooking
the potatoes
1½ pounds red bliss or other red-skinned
potatoes, diced
8 ounces raw Mexican chorizo
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup diced yellow onion, from
approximately 1 large onion
1 tablespoon ground black pepper

FOR MAKING THE DUMPLINGS:

20 Shanghai-style dumpling wrappers
2 tablespoons neutral oil

FOR THE DILL CHIMICHURRI SAUCE:

1 shallot, minced
5 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
½ cup chopped fresh dill
3 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
¾ cup olive oil

FOR THE GARNISH:

Queso fresco, torn into small chunks

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

PUT the potatoes in a pot of cold salted water. Bring to a boil, uncovered, over high heat. Lower the heat a little and boil for approximately 15 minutes, until fork tender. Drain and place in a large bowl.

MEANWHILE, remove the casing from the chorizo and break it up into crumbles by hand.

HEAT the olive oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the chorizo and brown for approximately 7 minutes (do not stir until you begin to see the fat render, then stir occasionally). Add the onions and cook for an additional 3 to 4 minutes, until chorizo is crispy and onions translucent, stirring occasionally and scraping up the browned bits of chorizo.

ADD the chorizo and onions to the bowl of potatoes along with the salt and pepper.

USING a potato masher, gently mash the ingredients to make a filling, leaving some small chunks. Allow to cool completely.

TO MAKE THE DUMPLINGS:

FILL the wrappers using the Gauu Zi method. Set up a steamer. Steam the dumplings for 6 minutes, until dumpling skin is glossy, then pan-fry the dumplings

TO MAKE THE DILL CHIMICHURRI SAUCE AND SERVE:

WHILE the dumplings are steaming, combine all the ingredients except the olive oil in a medium bowl. Slowly stream the olive oil into the sauce, whisking until everything comes together. Serve the dumplings with the sauce and crumbled queso fresco on the side.

TRIPLE C (CHINESE CHOPPED CHEESE) DUMPLINGS

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

This is another one of Calvin's ingenious gauu zi collaborations with Adidas. This time the shoe company was celebrating a bunch of Bronx-born skateboarders and asked Cal to come up with an appropriate accompaniment in dumpling form. In addition to hip-hop, the Bronx is the ancestral home of the chopped cheese sandwich, a bodega-born hybrid of cheeseburger and cheesesteak. (Though purists note that the sandwich was most likely born at Hajji's in East Harlem.) Cal grew up working in a deli in Park Slope—shout-out to Doleh Supermarket on 8th Avenue—and knew his way around chopped cheese. What I love about these dumplings is that they really showcase the crazy flexibility of the form. Also, just like chopped cheese eaten drunkenly at 2 a.m. in the strangely harsh lights of a bodega, they are bone-warming, soul-saving, mouth-pleasing, and mind-blowingly delicious.

FOR THE FILLING:

1 pound ground beef
6 slices American cheese, diced
1 cup diced yellow onion, approximately
1 medium onion
1 tablespoon kosher salt
2 teaspoons ground black pepper
2 tablespoons neutral oil

FOR MAKING THE DUMPLINGS:

20 Shanghai-style dumpling wrappers
2 tablespoons neutral oil

FOR THE SAUCE:

½ cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon ketchup
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

FOR THE GARNISHES:

1 cup very thinly sliced iceberg lettuce
½ cup cherry tomatoes, sliced into thin rounds
¼ cup pickles, thinly sliced

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

IN a large bowl, combine ground beef, cheese, onions, salt, and pepper.

HEAT a large cast-iron skillet (or flat-top grill, if you have one) over medium-high heat. Add the neutral oil and heat until shimmering. Transfer half of the filling into the skillet, reserving the other half. Cook, breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon or spatula, until the meat is deeply browned, 2 to 3 minutes.

REMOVE from the heat, allow the mixture to cool completely, then add to the bowl with the raw ingredients, mixing well.

NOTE: *The raw meat provides the texture needed to mold the filling into the dumplings, while the cooked meat provides the flavors. If you were only using cooked meat, the texture of the filling would be too crumbly and the dumplings would fall apart when you bite into them.*

TO MAKE THE DUMPLINGS:

FILL the wrappers using the Gauu Zi method. Set up a steamer. Steam the dumplings for 6 to 8 minutes, until dumpling skin is glossy, then pan-fry the dumplings.

TO MAKE THE SAUCE AND GARNISHES:

WHILE the dumplings are steaming, in a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, ketchup, and mustard until it's a lovely shade of pink. Serve with the dumplings, with the garnishes on the side.

SIU MAI

What differentiates these dumplings from gauu zi is not only the size—smaller—but the wrappers, which are thinner and a darker yellow hue than the Shanghai-style wrappers used for soup dumplings and gauu zi. The word *siu mai* is a derivation of Shaoxi, which alludes to the origin of these dumplings. They were transported from their home in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, to Ghangzhou by Shaoxi traders. Over the years, Shaoxi became siu mai. From then, because siu mai are so delicious, their popularity has spread, and they have become as numerous as stars in the sky. Derivations are found in the shumai in Japan, xiu mai in Vietnam, and siomay in Indonesia.

HOW TO MAKE SIU MAI

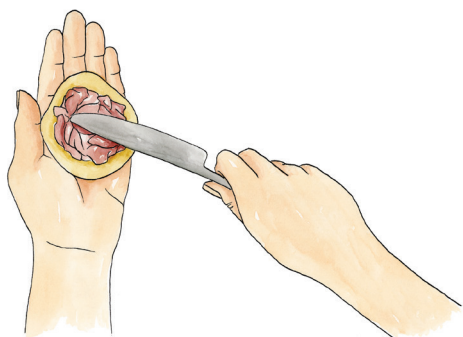
TYPE OF WRAPPER: Hong Kong-style circular wonton wrapper

STEP 1. Place 1 teaspoon of your filling in the center of the siu mai wrapper. Gently spread the filling in an even layer, leaving an $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch buffer.

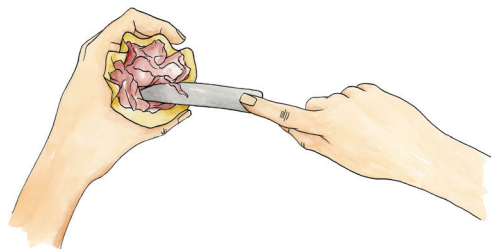
STEPS 2 & 3. Holding the now-laden wrapper in the palm of one hand, using a butter

knife, gently push the edge up to form a pleat while exerting pressure with the palm of the holding hand and your thumb so the wrapper stays cupped.

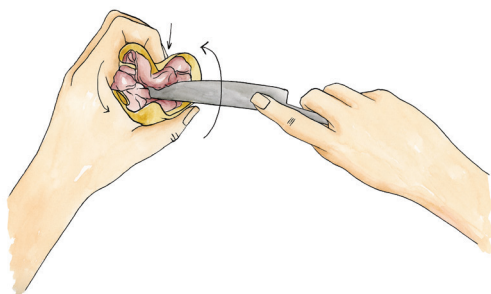
STEP 4. While maintaining that pressure, work your way around the dumpling until it looks like a beautifully filled cup with approximately 6 folds.



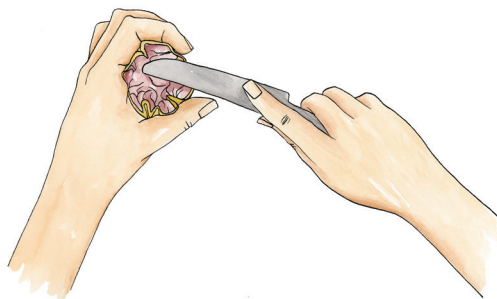
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CHICKEN SIU MAI

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

3 fresh shiitake mushrooms (or use dried and rehydrate in hot water for 15 minutes), roughly chopped
1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, diced
1 teaspoon salt
1½ teaspoons sugar
1 tablespoon chicken powder
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
20 Hong Kong-style circular wonton wrappers
Dumpling Dipping Sauce for serving

Combine all the filling ingredients in a large bowl. Stir everything in one direction until it resembles a fine paste, 3 to 5 minutes.

ASSEMBLE the siu mai. Set up a steamer and steam for 7 minutes until dumpling skin is glossy. Serve immediately, with dipping sauce if desired.

SHRIMP SIU MAI

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

8 ounces raw shrimp, peeled, deveined,
and patted dry, roughly chopped
1 tablespoon neutral oil
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon chicken powder
20 Hong Kong–style circular wonton
wrappers
Dumpling Dipping Sauce
for serving

COMBINE all the filling ingredients in a large bowl. Stir everything in one direction until it resembles a fine paste, 3 to 5 minutes.

ASSEMBLE the siu mai.

SET up a steamer and steam for 7 minutes until dumpling skin is glossy. Serve immediately, with dipping sauce if desired.

PORK SIU MAI

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

1 recipe Pork Master Filling
20 Hong Kong–style circular wonton
wrappers
Dumpling Dipping Sauce for serving

ASSEMBLE the siu mai Set up a steamer and steam for 7 minutes until dumpling skin is glossy. Serve immediately, with dipping sauce if desired.

HAR GOW

Pretty much everyone who walks through the door at Nom Wah orders the har gow—the shrimp dumplings. They're like the pastrami sandwich at Katz's. Shrimp dumplings are the quintessential measure of dim sum. When it comes to har gow, a restaurant's caliber is judged on how thin the dumpling wrapper is and how many folds join the wrapper together. The more folds, the higher the quality of the kitchen and the more dexterous the dumpling maker. Dumpling folds are like thread counts in suits but better, because dumplings are more delicious than suits.

Back in the day, we used to make all our dumplings by hand. We'd get eight, ten, even twelve pleats into each dumpling. But it was a laborious process. Making dumplings is traditionally a two-person operation. You have the person who rolls out the dough using the side of a cleaver to press it paper-thin and the person who spoons the filling in and folds. The two work in tandem and fast, since once the dough is rolled out it quickly dries and becomes brittle. We started off that way, but we do crazy volume these days, so a few years ago I dropped 50 Gs on a fancy automatic dumpling-wrapping machine. Now our pleats are molded. Some might call that cheating; I call it innovation.

For most of our dumplings, I recommend buying premade wrappers, but har gow is different. The wrappers are so delicate and thin that we haven't been able to find a better solution than making the wrappers from scratch. The trick to achieving the crystal skin is using scalding hot water, which allows the starches to dissolve nearly completely.

HAR GOW

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

FOR THE FILLING:

8 ounces raw shrimp, peeled, deveined, and patted dry, roughly chopped
1 tablespoon neutral oil
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon chicken powder

FOR THE DOUGH:

1 cup wheat starch (or potato starch)
½ cup cornstarch (or tapioca starch)
3 teaspoons lard (or a neutral oil)
1¼ cups water

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

MIX all the filling ingredients in a large bowl, stirring in one direction for 3 to 5 minutes, until the mixture starts to look and feel sticky. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour while you prepare the dough.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH:

SIFT the wheat starch (or potato starch) and cornstarch (or tapioca starch) into a large bowl.

IN a medium saucepan, bring 1¼ cups water to a boil over medium-high heat and slowly pour it into the starch mixture, stirring rapidly with chopsticks. Add the lard (or neutral oil) and continue to stir with chopsticks until a loose dough ball forms.

TURN the dough out of the bowl onto a clean counter or work surface. Knead the dough by hand for a couple of minutes, until the dough has formed a smooth ball and feels uniform and elastic.

ROLL the dough into a cylinder about 3 inches thick and 1½ to 2 feet long and divide it into 20 equal pieces. Form the pieces into balls. Working quickly and using your hand, flatten each ball into circles about 3 inches in diameter. Cover the dough pieces with a damp paper towel as you make them.

ADD 1½ teaspoons of filling to each circle and fold the dumplings according to the Gau Zi method.

SET up a steamer. Working in batches, add the dumplings to the steamer and steam for 6 minutes, until dumpling skin is glossy. Serve immediately.

MAKE AHEAD: The filling can be kept refrigerated for up to 3 days or frozen for 3 months.

VARIATIONS:

SHRIMP AND CHIVE HAR GOW

Mix 2 ounces chopped chives into the filling.

SHRIMP AND SNOW PEA LEAF HAR GOW

Same as above but substitute roughly chopped snow pea leaves for the chives. Duh.

SHANGHAI SOUP DUMPLINGS (XIAO LONG BAO)

MAKES 36 SOUP DUMPLINGS

When as a kid I realized how soup dumplings were made, it felt like a cosmic mystery had been solved. The soup, though liquid at the time of serving, is solid at the time of wrapping. My mind was blown, and I filed this knowledge away as surely applicable for some life lesson later on . . . I'm still waiting to apply it. These dumplings are high in the dim sum pantheon and are originally from Jiangsu, a region north of Shanghai, hence the name. Though they fall into the genus of dumplings, they are actually bao, and the same technique) is used to enclose them.

Just as important as mastering the making of xiao long bao, which you'll frequently find referred to as XLB, is mastering the eating of them. Every day I see diners at Nom Wah lose their precious pork broth by improper technique. The right way to eat XLB is first to grasp the dumpling by the nipple, then dip the dumpling, unbroken, into the sauce. Then gently cup the dumpling on a soup spoon before piercing the skin with tooth or chopstick to allow the juices to escape into the bowl of the spoon. Then you eat the soup dumpling and your eyes close as the rich, fatty pork broth fills your mouth. Then you repeat this until you can't eat any more and have to go take a nap.

FOR THE GELATIN CUBES:

4 tablespoons gelatin powder
2 cups chicken broth

FOR THE DOUGH:

2 cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup warm water

FOR THE FILLING:

2 pounds ground pork (70% lean)
¼ cup Shaoxing wine
1½ teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

1½ teaspoons sugar

2 tablespoons light soy sauce

¼ teaspoon ground white pepper

3 slices fresh ginger, ⅛ to ¼ inch thick,
minced

2 cups traditional gelatin cubes (see above)

FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE:

1½ cups Chinese black vinegar

5 slices fresh ginger, ⅛ to ¼ inch thick,
julienned

TO MAKE GELATIN CUBES:

HEAT the chicken broth in a pot on medium-low heat. Slowly add the gelatin powder, stirring until fully dissolved.

TURN off the heat and transfer mixture into a pan or rectangular container. Once the liquid has completely cooled, cover and refrigerate from 6 hours to overnight. It will have the consistency of a firm jelly.

WHEN ready to use, turn out the gelatin onto a cutting board and cut into ¾-inch cubes.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH:

IN a large bowl, slowly combine the flour and warm water 1 tablespoon at a time. Knead dough by hand for 7 to 10 minutes, until it is very soft and smooth. Cover with a damp cloth and let rest for 30 minutes.

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

PUT the ground pork in a food processor and pulse until it has a paste-like texture, roughly 1 minute. Transfer the pork to a bowl along with the remaining filling ingredients. Mix everything together thoroughly for about 2 minutes, until the mixture looks like a paste without any clumps. Gently fold the gelatin cubes into the mixture, being careful not to break the cubes. Cover and transfer the filling to the refrigerator until you are ready to make the dumplings. If wrapping immediately, put the filling in the freezer for 15 minutes to firm up.

TO MAKE THE DIPPING SAUCE:

IN a small bowl, mix together the black vinegar and ginger.

TO MAKE THE SOUP DUMPLINGS:

ROLL the dough into a 1¼-inch-wide log and cut off ½-ounce segments, each about the size of a pinball. Keep the dough under a damp cloth as you make your soup dumplings.

TO make each wrapper, roll the dough into a smooth ball between your hands, then place on a well-floured surface. Roll out as thinly as possible into discs about 3 inches in diameter. (You can use a cookie cutter if you want your XLB to be perfect.)

FILL each soup dumpling with 1 to 1½ teaspoons of filling. As I said earlier, xiao long bao are more bao than dumpling, which means you should use the bao method of closure.

SET up a steamer. Working in batches, add the soup dumplings to the steamer, making sure they are not touching, and steam for about 8 minutes or until dumpling skin is glossy. Serve immediately with the dipping sauce.

I mean, stat. These have to be eaten so hot they burn your mouth.

FRIED WU GOK

MAKES 24 PIECES

Raw taro (芋頭) looks like the unfriendly love child of a coconut and a potato. But this root vegetable is one of the most versatile starches on the planet. The Hawaiians call it *kalo* and use it to make poi. It is used across West Africa and much of the southern hemisphere. Originally from Malaysia, taro has long been a staple throughout China. It's used for everything from dumplings to casseroles to bubble tea. Here, its ability to crisp into a frizzy, almost bird's-nest-like tangle is put to good use in this traditional dim sum. As you've probably noticed, for most dumpling wrappers I just say get thee to Twin Marquis—but in this case, it's worth the extra effort to make the taro wrapper from scratch.

FOR THE FILLING:

2½ teaspoons cornstarch
 1 tablespoon water
 ½ teaspoon salt (more as needed)
 ½ teaspoon chicken bouillon (more as needed)
 ¼ teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine
 5 ounces ground pork (70% lean)
 3 large dried shiitake mushrooms
 2 teaspoons neutral oil
 5 ounces fresh shrimp, peeled, deveined, and finely diced
 1 scallion, finely diced
 2 cloves garlic, finely diced
 ½ teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
 1 teaspoon dark soy sauce
 1 teaspoon cornstarch
 ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil

FOR THE WRAPPERS:

1½ pounds taro root
 8 tablespoons wheat starch
 ¾ cup boiling (must be boiling!) water

8 tablespoons lard

1 teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

Neutral oil for deep frying

TO START THE FILLING:

IN a small bowl, mix 1½ teaspoons of the cornstarch with 1 tablespoon water. In a large bowl, combine the salt, chicken bouillon, sugar, Shaoxing wine, and cornstarch-water mixture. Add the pork and stir to coat evenly with the marinade. Refrigerate for at least 15 minutes and up to 24 hours.

TO START THE WRAPPERS:

PEEL the taro and cut it into ¾-inch slices. Set up a steamer. Cover and steam the taro for 30 minutes, or until the slices are soft. Place the steamed taro in a bowl and mash until it becomes a paste.

TO FINISH THE FILLING:

WHILE the taro is steaming, continue making the filling. Submerge mushrooms in hot water for 20 to 30 minutes until tender. Remove, drain, and dice. Heat the neutral oil in a wok over medium heat. Add the pork, mushrooms, shrimp, scallion, and garlic. Add the five-spice powder, the soy sauce, the remaining 1 teaspoon cornstarch, and the toasted sesame oil and stir until the mixture forms a thick, saucy filling. Remove from the heat, transfer to a large bowl, cool, then refrigerate for 2 hours.


TO FINISH THE WRAPPERS AND SERVE:

PUT the wheat starch in a bowl and stir in the boiling (must be boiling!) water. Add the wheat starch mixture to the mashed taro, followed by the lard, baking soda, salt, and sugar. Knead the dough into a ball, then cut the dough into 24 equal-sized pieces.

TAKE one piece of dough, keeping the remaining dough covered with a damp cotton towel while you work, and create a small circular opening in the center with your thumb. Add 1 teaspoon of the chilled filling to the opening and press the filling into place inside the crevice so that you can fold the wrapper neatly around the sides. Pinch the dumpling closed, and with your hands, mold it into the shape of an egg. **REPEAT** until all 24 dumplings are complete, then cover and put them into the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

IN a large Dutch oven, heat 3 inches of oil to 375°F. Working in batches, deep-fry the dumplings for 2 to 3 minutes, until a nest-like texture appears on the surface of the dumplings. Carefully remove to a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Serve immediately.

ROLLS

 s crazy as it sounds, we're in the middle of a rice roll renaissance in New York. Cheung fun (腸粉), or Cantonese-style rice noodle rolls, are a popular treat in Guangdong. There, street food vendors set up steaming stalls on city streets where they churn out these silken delicacies, whose name literally means “intestine noodles,” because they look like those glistening entrails. But, man, are they delicious. That's thousands of miles away from New York's Chinatown, yet for some reason, recently a handful of really fricking good cheung fun spots have cropped up near Nom Wah. There's Joe's Steam Rice Rolls at Canal Street Market, Hak Box across the Manhattan Bridge overpass from us, and Yi Ji Shi Mo Noodle Corp on Elizabeth Street to name a few.

It's been great for me, though I've gained ten pounds from rice rolls alone. There's no denying rice rolls are brilliant. The way traditional rice rolls are made (we make them slightly differently) involves grinding rice into a near-powder and using it to make a thickened slurry. This is then spread out thinly and steamed. It's almost like making a

crepe. After a few minutes on a sheet pan in the steamer, the pale liquid slurry suddenly turns opaque and solid, creating a large rice noodle. Watching the vendor rolling the noodles up is as satisfying as sitting shotgun at the gas station and watching someone else clean the windshield. Ah, sweet squeegee ASMR.

Though Nom Wah is known for its dumplings, I have to say that of all the wrappers, this is my favorite. What I love about it is that the filling can go inside—as in shrimp and vegetable rolls—or into the actual liquid itself, as in cilantro scallion rolls. Don't sleep on cheung fun—they're supremely easy to make and even easier to eat, and though we don't list it here, you can most definitely throw some of your Master Fillings in here too if you're just a lonely wrapper looking for something to hold.

At the Tea Parlor, we use an industrial-sized big-ass hotel pan, but when making these at home, feel free to substitute in a 9½ x 13-inch quarter sheet pan. Basically, anything that allows you to form a thin layer will do.

PLAIN CHEUNG FUN

MAKES 6 RICE ROLLS

1½ cups rice flour
 3 tablespoons tapioca starch
 1 tablespoon wheat starch
 1 tablespoon potato starch
 ½ teaspoon salt
 2½ cups lukewarm water
 Neutral oil for greasing the pan

SIFT the rice flour, tapioca starch, wheat starch, potato starch, and salt into a large bowl. Mix in the lukewarm water, stirring until a consistency of very thin glue is reached.

WHEN ready to cook, mix again until there are no clumps. Using a brush, generously oil a rimmed quarter sheet pan. Using a ladle, pour just as much batter in the pan as needed to form a thin, even layer. (The thinner you can keep your roll, the better.)

SET up a steamer. Place the sheet pan in the steamer and steam for 6 minutes, or until you see bubbles on top of the mixture.

CAREFULLY remove the sheet pan from the steamer and set on a work surface (it will be hot, so be prudent). Let cool for a minute or so. Then, using a bench scraper, start rolling the rice roll from the top of the pan away from you until folded into a loose roll. Cut in half widthwise.

BRUSH the pan with oil again and repeat until you've used up all the batter.

WHEN ready to serve, briefly re-steam the rolls for 1 to 2 minutes until hot.

SWEET DIPPING SAUCE FOR CHEUNG FUN

½ cup light soy sauce
 ¾ cup dark soy sauce
 ¾ cup sugar
 1 cup water
 1½ teaspoons oyster sauce
 1½ teaspoons chicken powder

HEAT a small saucepan to medium-low heat and add all ingredients. Stir until sugar and chicken powder are dissolved. Serve atop rice rolls.

SHRIMP RICE ROLLS AND CILANTRO AND SCALLION RICE ROLLS

Rice rolls can be filled either before or after they are steamed. If you're placing the filling in the pre-steamed roll, you effectively use the same steam to cook the roll as you do what's inside it. Cool, right? Shrimp rolls are like that. Ditto cilantro and scallion rolls. In both the slightly sweet but mostly textural wrapper of the rice roll is the canvas for the sweetness of the shrimp, in one case, and the herbaceous nature of the greens, in the other. Though the recipe is for cilantro and scallion, feel free to experiment with other herbs of your choosing.

SHRIMP RICE ROLLS

MAKES ABOUT 6 ROLLS

1 recipe Plain Cheung Fun
18 medium shrimp, peeled, deveined, and patted dry

MAKE the batter for the rice rolls. After you pour the rice slurry into your pan, put 6 shrimp onto each roll, placing them 1 inch from the edges. Steam as directed and serve immediately.

CILANTRO AND SCALLION RICE ROLLS

MAKES ABOUT 6 ROLLS

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons finely chopped scallion
1 recipe Plain Cheung Fun

IN a small bowl, mix the cilantro and scallion. **MAKE** the batter for the rice rolls. After you pour the rice slurry into your pan, sprinkle the herbs on top, dividing them evenly. Steam as directed and serve immediately.

YOUTIAO (FRIED DOUGH)

Some rice noodle rolls are filled post facto. In these cases the fillings are distinct, more akin to the burrito paradigm. Youtiao, Chinese savory churro, are a good example of this. Youtiao is the ultimate breakfast food—an indicator of dim sum’s origins as matutinal fare—and is often dipped in congee (rice porridge). It’s our equivalent of a croissant in a latte. When youtiao is wrapped in cheung fun it is called *ja leung*, a glorious if all too rare instance of carb-on-carb in the Cantonese kitchen. You can make youtiao from scratch, but it’s a hassle. We buy ours from Twin Marquis on Canal Street in Chinatown in New York, but you can also buy them online, in internet Chinatown. Though they come already cooked, we deep-fry them for extra crunch.

1 cup neutral oil

3 youtiao

1 recipe Plain Cheung Fun

IN a deep pot or wok, heat the neutral oil to 375°F. Add the youtiao and fry for 5 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove, and place on paper towel-lined plate to drain. Pat dry.

AFTER rice rolls are steamed, enclose 1 youtiao in each as you roll them.

VEGETABLE RICE ROLLS

MAKES ABOUT 6 ROLLS

Unlike dumplings, one doesn't actually *cook* the filling of cheung fun in the cheung fun itself. So I wouldn't recommend using Pork Master Filling or Shrimp Master Filling here. You can, however, use No Pork No Shrimp Master Filling, since the vegetables have been precooked. Just be careful when you fill the rolls because the filling doesn't cling together naturally.

1 recipe Plain Cheung Fun

1 recipe No Pork No Shrimp Master Filling

AFTER your rice rolls are fully steamed, line 3 tablespoons of filling ½ inch from the edges.

FOLD the lip over, then complete the folding.

STEAMED SPARERIB RICE ROLLS

MAKES ABOUT 6 ROLLS

You can also make cheung fun with steamed spareribs. This is a classic dim sum item, frequently ordered by the old-timers at Nom Wah. To me it doesn't make sense, because the silkiness of the rice roll is offset by the crunchy cartilage of the steamed spareribs on which many like to chew. However, from what I observe, people like to alternate bites of noodle and steamed sparerib. Silky and crunchy, a classic combo.

Evenly spreading the spareribs along the edge of each steamed rice noodle a quarter inch from the edge allows you the ability to execute one fold before you reach the meat. Then roll up like a body in a carpet. You know what I'm talking about.

1 recipe Plain Cheung Fun

12 ounces Steamed Spareribs

AFTER your rice rolls are fully steamed, enclose 2 ounces or so of spareribs in each as you roll.

BEAN CURD ROLLS

MAKES 12 ROLLS

I continue to stand in awe of the versatility of the soybean. Soy products hold a place of pride in Chinese cuisine, from tofu (also known as bean curd) to liquified, fermented soybeans in the form of soy sauce. In the realm of dim sum, where everything becomes either wrapping or filling, soybean finds itself on both sides of the divide. Here it lives as bean curd skin, a wrapper. Bean curd skin is formed by boiling soy milk, which forms a solid layer on top of the liquid. This is then dried and sold. Since there is no coagulant, it isn't technically tofu, but who cares? It combines tofu's delicate flavor with the ability to wrap itself around an array of fillings. Unlike dumplings, these bean curd rolls must be fried first and *then* steamed. I suppose you could make your own tofu skin, but we buy Dragon bean curd skin, which has six sheets per package. Just be extremely careful handling the package, as—just like people's skin—dry bean curd skin cracks.

1 tablespoon cornstarch
2½ tablespoons water
5 sheets dried bean curd skin
1 recipe Pork Master Filling
¼ cup bamboo shoots, julienned
3 tablespoons neutral oil
2 scallions, diced, for garnish
Oyster sauce for serving

IN a small bowl, mix the cornstarch with the water to form a paste (this will be the glue that holds the edges of the bean curd skin together).

CAREFULLY remove the dried bean curd skin sheets from the package. Soak each sheet separately in warm water for a minute or so to make it pliable. When ready to stuff one, carefully transfer it to a paper towel.

CUT the tofu skin diagonally. Place 3 tablespoons of the Pork Master Filling on the long edge of the triangle. Equally divide the bamboo shoots among the skins atop the filling. No need to leave a buffer.

ROLL the skin over once, then fold in the corners and roll again like a joint.

USE the cornstarch paste to moisten the edges and seal the skin together.

HEAT the neutral oil in a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat. Pan-fry the rolls, in batches if needed, flipping constantly but taking care not to allow them to open, for approximately 5 minutes, until golden. Remove with a spider or tongs onto a paper towel-lined plate to drain.

SET up a steamer. Steam the roll, in batches if needed, for about 8 minutes until bean curd is silken. Remove from the steamer, top with the scallions, and serve immediately, with oyster sauce on the side.

VARIATION:

STEAMED SHRIMP BEAN CURD SKIN ROLLS

For a healthier alternative—but a no less delicious one—sub out the Pork Master Filling for Shrimp Master Filling and throw in about ¼ cup of finely chopped scallions for extra crunch.

VARIATION:

VEGETABLE BEAN CURD SKIN ROLLS

What if I told you that you could sub out the Pork Master Filling for No Pork No Shrimp Master Filling in the same quantity? Would you be stoked? Would you be surprised? Would you be like, “Finally, a vegan option in a dim sum book! It’s about goddamn time!” ?

OPTIONAL:

CHINESE GRAVY FOR STEAMED BEAN CURD ROLLS

Instead of the oyster sauce, you can serve this gravy over your steamed bean curd rolls. This recipe makes enough for one batch of rice rolls.

- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon MSG
- ¾ teaspoon oyster sauce
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon dark soy sauce (you can add more for deeper color)
- ¾ cup water
- 1 tablespoon potato starch

IN a small saucepan, whisk together all the ingredients except the potato starch over medium heat until the sauce comes to a simmer. Add the potato starch, whisking until dissolved completely. When it comes to a boil, remove the pan from the heat. Immediately pour over your steamed bean curd rolls.

SPRING ROLLS

MAKES 10 ROLLS

Though they are technically rolls, I always think of spring rolls (春卷) more as cigar-shaped dumplings since the filling is so dependent on the wrapper. Though spring rolls are high up in the empyrean of Chinese American food, they're often freebies, Asian lagniappe that come with the Special #5 Combo. And despite the fact that they're meant to be filled with fresh vegetables and were traditionally eaten during the spring festival—when the earth came alive with the bounty of healthy living!—they have a bad reputation as grease-leaden bloat sticks. But that's not the fault of the roll but of slapdash frying. At their best, spring rolls are bright and crunchy with a fresh vegetable payload, both virtuous and toothsome. Just make sure your oil is hot enough so when you fry the rolls, they don't become oil-logged.

1 tablespoon cornstarch
2½ tablespoons water
10 sheets square spring roll wrappers
1 recipe No Pork No Shrimp Master Filling
Neutral oil
2 scallions, diced, for garnish
Oyster sauce for serving

IN a small bowl, mix the cornstarch with the water to create your sealing slurry.

PLACE a wrapper on a clean, dry surface, with a corner we'll call South facing you. Add about 3 tablespoons of filling in a cigar shape from the East corner to the West corner, leaving about 2 inches of clearance from each corner of the wrapper.

FOLD in the East and West corners to slightly overlap atop the filling. Then fold up the South corner toward the North, covering the filling. Roll once more.

APPLY the cornstarch mixture to exposed edges of the wrapper. Fold over to close.

IN a large saucepan, heat 3 inches of neutral oil over medium-high to 350°F.

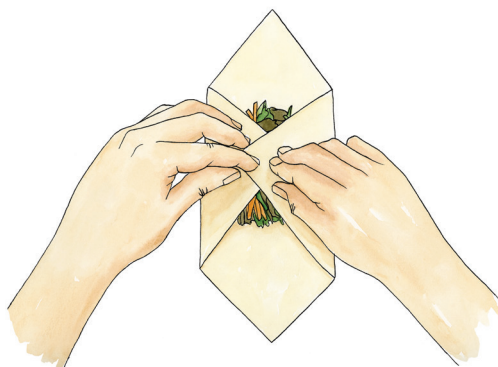
WORKING in two batches, fry the rolls until lightly browned and crisp, turning as needed, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain.

SERVE immediately topped with scallions and oyster sauce on the side.

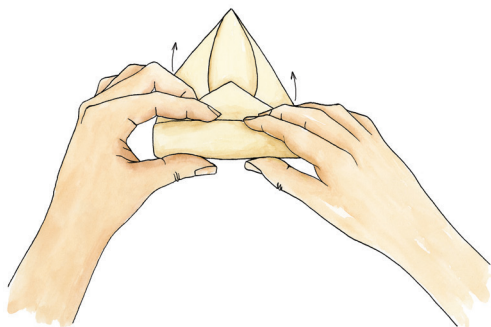
MAKE AHEAD: You can assemble the spring rolls ahead of time and freeze them unfried. When ready to fry, do so straight from frozen—do not thaw.



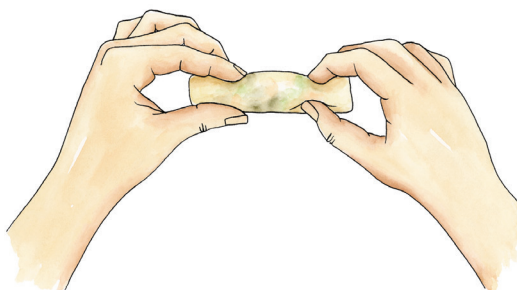
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OG EGG ROLLS

MAKES 6 EGG ROLLS

Let's just admit it: the egg roll has a terrible reputation. It's the wallflower of the Chinese American menu. But that's only because so few restaurants take the time to actually make a proper version. Crack open a normcore egg roll and good luck finding eggs anywhere in the thing. The wrapper is wheat; the filling is cabbage. The eggs are phantoms. But at Nom Wah, we make legit egg rolls—OG egg rolls, as we call them—made like they should be, with actual eggs.

The egg roll is a true son of the Chinese American kitchen. In fact, according to Andrew Coe, author of *Chop Suey*, the egg roll was invented a few blocks away from Nom Wah in the early twentieth century at Lung Fong on Canal Street, one of the pioneering Chinese American banquet restaurants in New York. But it couldn't have been much later that Nom Wah started making one.

When I took over the Tea Parlor, one of the items my Uncle Wally was most proud of—in fact, one of the only items Uncle Wally was proud of—was the egg roll. The reason is simple: we take the time and make the effort to give an egg roll the respect it deserves. Every morning, a chef comes into the kitchen, heats up a 9-inch pan, and starts to make delicate egg crepes. Silky and impossibly thin, the hundreds he makes form a tower that resembles a *mille crêpe* cake but . . . eggier.

Today, when an order comes in, we hand-fold the egg roll, wrapping it around a vegetable filling. Then we coat the package in a mixture of flour and water and fry in hot oil until golden. The result is a crispy, flavorful baton that breaks open to reveal the delicate flavor and texture of the crepe and the succulent filling. When I watch a new customer break open the egg roll, I love to see their face light up. It's got the surprise of something you thought you knew but didn't, like in those scenes in high school rom-coms, when the nerd comes back after summer as the coolest kid on campus, and all the kids in the hallway are like, "Oh, damn. What did I miss?"

6 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast
 2 tablespoons neutral oil, plus more for
 brushing and frying
 10 large eggs, beaten
 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
 2 tablespoons cornstarch
 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine
 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
 1¼ teaspoons sugar
 10 dried shiitake mushrooms
 ½ cup bamboo shoots, julienned
 ½ cup whole small button mushrooms
 (halved if larger)
 ½ cup chopped baby corn
 ½ cup finely chopped celery
 ½ cup chopped water chestnuts
 1 small carrot, julienned
 1 clove garlic, minced
 Kosher salt
 Ground white pepper
 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon water
 1 cup all-purpose flour

PREHEAT the oven to 350°F.

PLACE the chicken on baking sheet, transfer to the oven, and cook through, approximately 40 minutes. Let cool briefly, then, using a fork, shred the meat. Set aside.

MEANWHILE, heat a 9-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Brush the skillet lightly with neutral oil, then add ⅓ of the beaten eggs, swirling the pan to coat evenly. Cook until lightly browned on the bottom and just set, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer the egg crepe to a plate and cover loosely to keep warm. Repeat until finished.

IN a small bowl, whisk the soy sauce with 1 tablespoon of the cornstarch, the wine, the

toasted sesame oil, and ¼ teaspoon of the sugar.

SUBMERGE mushrooms in hot water for 20 to 30 minutes until tender. Remove, drain, and dice.

IN a wok or large skillet, heat the 2 tablespoons neutral oil until shimmering. Add the shiitakes, bamboo shoots, button mushrooms, baby corn, celery, water chestnuts, carrot, and garlic. Stir-fry over medium-high heat until the vegetables are softened, about 8 minutes. Add the soy sauce mixture and cook until thickened, about 2 minutes.

SCRAPE into a bowl, stir in the shredded chicken, and season with salt and white pepper. Let cool completely, then refrigerate until chilled, about 30 minutes.

IN a small bowl, whisk 1 tablespoon cornstarch with 1 tablespoon water.

TO assemble, follow the folding instructions for the Spring Rolls.

OVER medium-high heat, in a large saucepan, bring 3 inches of vegetable oil to 350°F.

IN a medium bowl, whisk the flour and the remaining 1 teaspoon sugar. Whisk in the remaining 1 cup water until smooth.

DIP 3 of the egg rolls in the flour batter. Using tongs, carefully lower the egg rolls into the hot oil. Fry until lightly browned and crisp, turning as needed to ensure they are evenly colored, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Repeat the coating and frying process with the remaining egg rolls. Serve immediately.

CAKES

We call them cakes and yet they are not truly cakes. One is a pancake; the others, though loaf-like, are neither bready nor baked. But cakes are my favorite section of the dim sum menu. Turnip cakes (lo bak go)—which are actually made with Chinese radish (daikon), not turnip—are a staple in all dim sum houses. Studded with Chinese sausage, dried shrimp, and mushrooms, lo bak go combine the unique, slightly sweet flavor of the daikon with a grab bag of fillings. Every bite is a

jackpot. When sliced and pan-fried, lo bak go is a study in contrasts, featuring a crispy crust and a tender interior. Like everything else, it seems, turnip cakes were traditionally eaten during Chinese New Year—because the word for radish kinda sounds like the word for good fortune. Thankfully, we now have the good fortune of eating radish year-round. Please note that you'll need to plan ahead when making lo bak go because it has to chill overnight to set.

SCALLION PANCAKES

MAKES 8 PANCAKES

Every country has its crepe, and the scallion pancake (葱油饼 or cung you bing) is ours. While Western pancakes are made with batter, this one is made with many layers of flaky dough studded with scallions. They're crisp and delicious snacks, as popular as a breakfast for school kids as a late-night snack for drunken revelers. (Ever consider how much drunk food and kid food overlap?) When I look around Nom Wah, I'll often see every single table with an order of scallion pancakes, and I laugh. If only they knew how easy these are to make, we'd be out of business.

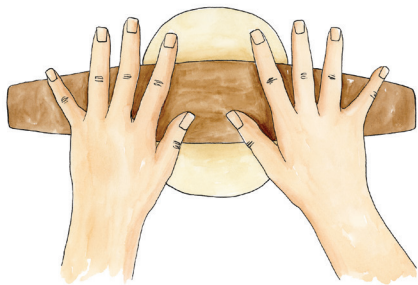
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for kneading
1½ cups boiling water
4 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
8 scallions, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
½ cup neutral oil
Dumpling Dipping Sauce
for serving

PLACE the flour in a large bowl. Add the boiling water and stir with a wooden spoon until the dough forms a ball.

TURN the dough out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, 4 to 6 minutes. The dough should not be sticky to the touch, nor should it stick to the table. Place in a large bowl, cover, and let rest for 30 minutes.

ONCE rested, divide the dough into 8 equal-sized pieces. Roll each piece into a thin circle, 8 inches in diameter. Brush each circle with ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil and evenly sprinkle with 1 heaping tablespoon of scallion and ⅛ teaspoon salt. Starting with the side closest to you, roll the disc well, like you would a joint. Then, working from one side, roll into a coil. Finally, use your rolling pin to evenly flatten the coil to ⅛-inch thickness.

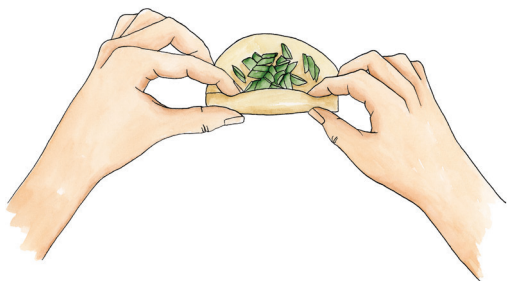
IN a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the neutral oil over medium-high heat. Cook the pancakes one at a time, adding another tablespoon of oil for each pancake, until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Serve immediately, with dipping sauce if desired.



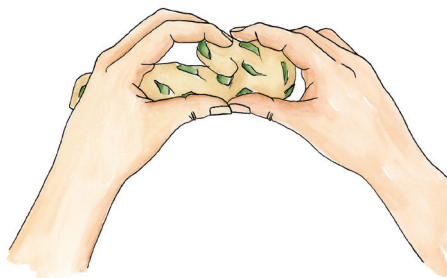
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TURNIP CAKES

SERVES 6

5 dried shiitake mushrooms
 2 medium daikon (Chinese radishes),
 approximately 2½ pounds
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt
 3 tablespoon neutral oil, plus more for
 greasing
 1 link Chinese sausage, roughly chopped
 1 tablespoon dried shrimp, soaked in warm
 water for 30 minutes, dried, then roughly
 chopped
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 ½ teaspoon chicken powder
 1¼ cups rice flour
 Ground white pepper
 1 tablespoon cornstarch
 1 scallion, finely chopped
 Hoisin sauce for serving

SUBMERGE mushrooms in hot water for 20 to 30 minutes until tender. Drain and roughly chop.

PEEL the daikon and grate it on the largest holes of a box grater. Transfer to a large bowl along with the salt and mix together lightly. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit for 20 minutes.

WRAP the daikon in a kitchen towel and squeeze it over a bowl. Set the dry daikon aside. If you have less than 3½ cups of daikon water in the bowl, add enough warm tap water to reach that amount.

IN a large pot, preferably with a wide bottom, heat 1 tablespoon of the neutral oil

over medium heat. Add the sausage, along with the hydrated shrimp and mushrooms, and cook, stirring constantly, until you see fat releasing from the sausage and it becomes slightly crisp, approximately 2 minutes.

USING a slotted spoon, transfer the sausage, shrimp, and mushrooms to a small bowl. Leave the fat in the pot. Stir in the dry daikon, sugar, and chicken powder. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes. Do not brown. Add the daikon water and bring to a boil, stirring frequently, then lower the heat to medium-low.

IN a small bowl, whisk the rice flour, white pepper, and cornstarch, then whisk in just as much water as needed to form a slurry. Add the slurry to the pot and stir constantly for 2 minutes, or until a thick paste has formed. Turn off the heat. Return the sausage, shrimp, and mushrooms to the pot and stir to combine.

STEAM according to instructions. Oil a 9 x 13-inch baking dish, and use a rubber spatula to distribute the mixture evenly into the dish. Place the dish in the steamer and steam for 45 minutes to 1 hour, until cake is pearlescent and holds its form. Let cool in the refrigerator overnight.

TO portion, remove the turnip cake from the baking dish, either by cutting it into pieces

and removing with a spatula or, preferably, turning it out whole. If the latter, cut in half, then lengthwise in thirds, again lengthwise in thirds, and then across in thirds to form flat squares.

HEAT the remaining 2 tablespoons neutral oil a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Place the turnip cake slices in the pan,

working in batches if needed. Cook, without stirring or moving them, for 3 to 4 minutes, until the turnip cakes are crispy on one side. Flip and repeat on the other side. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain excess oil.

TO serve, place the slices on a serving platter, garnish with the scallion, and serve with hoisin sauce.

TARO HASH CAKES

MAKES 12 CAKES

When we first opened Nom Wah Nolita in 2016 with Calvin Eng, I was impressed by the reckless abandon with which he mashed together the dim sum we'd been making for nearly a century—which comes from a tradition thousands of years old—with foods from the more recent past. This, for instance, is the marriage between a classic Jewish nosh of the Lower East Side and a classic Chinese ingredient. I would wager that the Chinese root vegetable taro was unknown in the shtetls of Europe. But Calvin loved latkes, those fried potato pancakes eaten at Hanukkah, and he resolved to Nom Wah—ify them. Here the taro is the body double for the potato, the plum sauce is the applesauce, and the labneh—the first and only time labneh made a cameo at Nom Wah—stands in for the sour cream.

FOR THE CAKES:

2 pounds taro root, cleaned, peeled, and quartered lengthwise
1 large yellow onion
1 tablespoon salt
2 teaspoons ground black pepper
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon cornstarch
Neutral oil for frying

FOR THE GARNISHES:

2 tablespoons plum sauce
2 tablespoons labneh
1 bunch scallions, sliced
Trout roe (if you're fancy)

PUT the taro into a pot of cold water, cover, and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil until just pierceable with a fork, 5 to 8 minutes after the water starts to boil (keep a close eye, as taro tends to go from rock-hard to mushy in seconds).

MEANWHILE, roughly grate the yellow onion. Place it inside a dish towel and wring it out over the sink to remove all of the water.

ONCE fork-tender (but not mushy), drain, pat the taro dry, and roughly grate. Put in a large bowl along with the grated onion, salt, black pepper, garlic power, and cornstarch.

FORM cakes the size of a hockey puck (about 3 ounces), using a scale or a large ice cream scoop to measure and your hands to shape them.

ADD enough oil to a large cast-iron skillet to reach 1 inch in depth. Heat over medium heat, then add your taro cakes, working in batches if necessary. Pan-fry on both sides until golden brown and crispy, approximately 5 to 7 minutes, pressing down gently every so often to create a good sear.

SERVE with garnishes of your choice.

RICE

The funny thing about fried rice—which we do so well at Nom Wah—is that it was traditionally a leftover dish, a way to repurpose extra or day-old rice. Hanging out with its friends in the wok, the cold cooked rice emerges renewed, rich with wok hei, resurrected. But at Nom Wah, plain cooked rice isn't part of the dim sum repertoire—it's not something we serve. So to make our beloved fried rice, we end up buying rice, cooking it, cooling it, and frying it. It's so delicious, all the fuss is worth it. However, if I were you, I would bookmark these recipes next time you order takeout. They always give you way too much rice

anyway. Then, the next night, make one of these fried rice dishes, exponentially more delicious than whatever General Tso's you had the first go around.

The following recipes are just suggestions. The beauty of fried rice is that you can toss pretty much whatever you want, whatever you got, in it: rotisserie chicken, broccoli, bacon, carrots, squash! Just make sure that whatever you want to go in there is already prepped by the time the wok gets going. Fried rice is no gentleman: he waits for no one and reaches completion in a few minutes.

EGG FRIED RICE

SERVES 6

Egg fried rice is the OG fried rice. In 600 AD, the culinarian Xie Feng mentions it in his book *Shi Jeng (The Book of Food)* as “broken golden rice.” The gold likely refers to the eggs that stud the rice.

4 cups cooked white rice
4 tablespoons neutral oil, plus more if needed
5 large eggs, beaten
1 medium Spanish onion, finely chopped
½ cup snow pea shoots
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons dark soy sauce
2 scallions, finely chopped

LET the cooked rice sit uncovered in the fridge overnight to dry out. When ready to cook, gently toss the rice to loosen it up.

HEAT a wok over medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil. When oil is shimmering, add the eggs and scramble to whatever consistency you desire. Remove and set aside.

ADD the remaining 3 tablespoons oil to the wok, along with the onion, snow pea shoots,

and salt. Cook for a minute or two, until the onions are translucent. Add the rice, tossing constantly, followed immediately by the sugar, black pepper, soy sauce, and scrambled egg. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute, or until the rice starts to get crunchy. Add more oil if needed, if the rice looks dry or to help develop a crust. Top with the scallions and serve immediately.

VARIATION:

SHRIMP AND EGG FRIED RICE

1 pound shrimp, peeled, deveined, and patted dry, roughly chopped

BEFORE you cook the egg, boil 1 cup of water in a wok, add the shrimp and cook for 30 seconds to blanch. Follow the instructions as above, adding the shrimp when you add the onion and snow pea shoots.

STICKY RICE WITH CHINESE SAUSAGE

SERVES 6

Sticky, or glutinous, rice is also called sweet rice. We use it for both savory and sweet dishes. Glutinous rice is a variation of regular white rice (*Oryza sativa*) but with a starch that makes it, you guessed it, sticky. This dish, which translates as no mai fan, began as a leftover rice remediation (just like egg fried rice), and (also just like egg fried rice) is so good that we make sticky rice for the express purpose of using it here.

5 dried shiitake mushrooms
 1¼ cups dried shrimp
 2 cups uncooked glutinous rice
 2 tablespoons neutral oil
 3 links Chinese sausage, cut into small pieces
 1½ teaspoons salt
 1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine
 1½ tablespoons light soy sauce
 2 teaspoons dark soy sauce
 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
 1¼ teaspoons toasted sesame oil
 2 scallions, finely chopped, to garnish

SUBMERGE mushrooms in hot water for 20 to 30 minutes until tender. Remove, drain, and dice. Meanwhile, submerge shrimp in hot water for 30 minutes until rehydrated. Remove, drain, and pat dry.

PREPARE the rice according to the instructions on the package. Set aside to cool.

HEAT the neutral oil in a wok over medium heat. Add mushrooms to the wok along with the shrimp, sausage, and salt and stir-fry for 3 to 5 minutes, until the mushrooms are browned.

ADD the rice to the wok. Lower the heat and stir-fry for another 15 minutes. Add the Shaoxing wine, soy sauces, oyster sauce, and toasted sesame oil and agitate the wok rapidly to mix.

SERVE immediately, topped with the scallions.

NOODLES

Every culture has its way with and claim on noodles. But China is the undisputed birthplace of these long heaven-sent field-born ribbons. Researchers have found leftover noodles in northwestern China dating back four thousand years ago. Suck on that, Pompeii! Over the next four millennia, noodle development in China had been working up to one moment: this nest of crispy tangled noodles being slid over the worn Formica to you at Nom Wah Tea Parlor, studded with Chinese sausage and peppered up with hot sauce or perhaps simply ennobled by superior soy sauce. That's us, standing on the shoulders of giants, slurping their noodles.

But for real, the greatest contribution the Cantonese kitchen has given to noodledom in my mind is stir-frying them. Stir-frying

noodles gives them that indescribable crunch so many find alluring. It's *ex post facto* *al dente*. There are thousands of types of noodles throughout China, with broad variations between the wheat- and millet-made noodles of the North to the rice noodles of the South. There are pulled noodles, sliced noodles, square noodles, round noodles, thick noodles, and thin noodles. The only commonality is that they are long, because noodles—like everything in the traditional Chinese kitchen—hold a symbolic value too: as a representation of long life. To this day, when I think of noodles, the first thing that comes to mind is longevity. Here we mostly use thin dried egg noodles called *lo mein* we pick up from Twin Marquis, though, as you'll see, we make use of the broader *ho fun* noodles as well.

SZECHUAN TOFU NOODLES

SERVES 4

I didn't grow up in the era of Szechuan peppercorn, which, though it has been used for millennia in Szechuan cuisine, only recently became an it-ingredient in the States. But man, am I happy it's trendy. The weirdo tingly tangly feeling in the mouth is thanks to the hydroxy alpha sanshool, which makes your brain feel like your cells have been all shook up (as opposed to capsaicin, which makes them feel like they're burned). It's also responsible for the deliciousness of this dish, which makes use of sambal oelek as well, for some good ol'-fashioned mouth burn plus—and let's be honest, this is the secret—an irresistible mix of fried spices suspended in oil from Guizhou.

2 tablespoons light soy sauce
 1¼ teaspoons cornstarch
 1 tablespoon neutral oil
 ¼ cup diced Spanish onion
 ¼ cup minced garlic
 1 cup (½-inch) cubed firm tofu
 ⅓ cup Lao Gan Ma's Spicy Chili Crisp
 1½ teaspoons sambal oelek
 2 teaspoons light brown sugar
 3 tablespoons white vinegar
 ¼ cup Edamame Dumpling Broth
 ½ teaspoon mushroom powder
 ½ teaspoon Szechuan peppercorns
 ½ teaspoon chili powder
 1 pound Chinese lo mein noodles, cooked
 2 scallions, finely chopped, for garnish
 10 to 15 fresh cilantro leaves for garnish
 4 or 5 pickled red chilis, chopped, for garnish
 1 teaspoon fried garlic for garnish

IN a small bowl, combine the soy sauce and cornstarch to form a slurry.

HEAT the neutral oil in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the onions and garlic and sweat for 5 minutes without developing any color. Add the tofu to the pot and stir to combine. Cook for 5 minutes.

ADD the chili crisp, sambal oelek, brown sugar, vinegar, broth, mushroom powder, Szechuan peppercorns, and chili powder. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Add the cornstarch slurry and bring the mixture back to a boil, stirring frequently.

TURN off the heat and pour the sauce over the noodles. Garnish with scallions, cilantro, pickled chilis, and fried garlic.

PAN-FRIED NOODLES IN SUPERIOR SOY SAUCE

SERVES 4

Pan-fried noodles go through a two-step tango to reach peak pleasure: first they're quickly boiled and then they're thrown into the wok to get their crispiness. It's in the burning crucible of this wok, endowed with wok hei, that the noodles develop their fragrant satisfying character, commingling under such high temperature with the soy sauce, wine, oil, sugar, and herbs. If anyone asks you which dish embodies Cantonese cooking's high-wire act, it's this one.

4 teaspoons light soy sauce
 2 teaspoons dark soy sauce
 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine
 ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
 1 lb fresh thin HK-style egg noodles (we use the Twin Marquis brand)
 4 scallions, cut in 2-inch long slices
 1¼ cup white onion, thinly sliced
 3 cups bean sprouts

NOTE: *In our notes on soy sauce, we recommended Pearl River Bridge Superior Dark Soy Sauce for dark soy sauce. For an added oomph, we recommend using Pearl River Bridge Superior Light Soy Sauce as your light soy sauce for this recipe.*

MIX the soy sauces, toasted sesame oil, salt, sugar, wine, and white pepper in a small bowl and set aside.

BRING a pot of water to a boil and add the noodles. Cook fresh noodles for about

1 minute (or dried for about 2 minutes).

Drain, rinse under cold water, drain again very well, and then pat dry with a paper towel.

HEAT a wok or large pan over high heat and add 1 tablespoon of neutral oil to coat. Add white parts of the scallion and onion to the pan. Stir fry for about 1 to 2 minutes. Add the noodles to the pan. Add the soy sauce mixture and toss continuously for 2 minutes or until the noodles are golden brown. Add the bean sprouts and the rest of the scallions and toss for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the bean sprouts are slightly transparent but still crunchy.

VARIATION:

CHAR SIU NOODLES

FOLLOW the instructions above, adding 6 to 8 ounces chopped char siu along with the scallions.

GARLIC EGGPLANT NOODLES

SERVES 4

Since Chinese eggplant has fewer seeds, it is noticeably less bitter than its fellow nightshades. This makes it the perfect ensemble player in this cast of heat, ginger, and garlic. Though not technically a dim sum preparation, Julie Cole developed the recipe as a mouthwatering and hearty vegetarian option at Nom Wah Nolita, and it's since gone on to be one of the best sellers.

1 to 2 tablespoons neutral oil
 1 medium Spanish onion, finely chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
 1 large or 2 medium Chinese eggplants, sliced into ¼-inch rounds
 1 tablespoon white miso paste
 ¼ teaspoon crushed chili flakes
 ¼ teaspoon ground Szechuan peppercorn
 ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
 ½ teaspoon chili powder
 ½ cup aji-mirin cooking wine
 ¼ cup Chinese black vinegar
 1 tablespoon sugar
 ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
 1½ tablespoons water
 4 tablespoons light soy sauce
 1 small handful fresh Thai basil, picked off the stems, thinly sliced
 1 pound Chinese lo mein noodles, cooked
 2 scallions, chopped, for garnish
 10 to 15 fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish
 4 or 5 pickled red chilis, chopped, for garnish
 1 teaspoon fried garlic for garnish

HEAT the neutral oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and

ginger and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

ADD the eggplant, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring, for 10 minutes, or until the eggplant is cooked through (look for the eggplant to appear slightly translucent and no longer white). If the mixture appears dry, add 1 tablespoon neutral oil to moisten.

ADD the miso paste, crushed chili flakes, ground Szechuan peppercorn, white pepper, and chili powder. Stir to combine and cook for 1 to 2 minutes.

ADD the aji-mirin, black vinegar, sugar, salt, water, and soy sauce and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower the heat back to medium and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

REMOVE from the heat. Pulse the sauce with an immersion blender 2 or 3 times to combine (there will still be chunks). Alternatively, take 2 cups of the sauce and pulse in a blender 1 or 2 times, return the blended sauce to the pot, and stir to combine.

TOP the noodles with the sauce mixture and garnish with basil, scallions, cilantro, pickled chilis, and fried garlic.

SLOPPY JOE NOODLES

AKA SPICY CHICKEN BOLOGNESE SERVED OVER WHEAT NOODLES

SERVES 4

To get from Italy to China, you have to cross the Ionian Sea, the Black Sea, Greece, Turkey, the entire Middle East, and the Caucasus. To get from Little Italy to Chinatown, you have to cross Delancey Street. No wonder our foods have become as entwined as . . . a bowl of spaghetti or lo mein. Noodles are noodles are noodles, and in this preparation, we were inspired by the pasta alla Bolognese offered at nearly every one of the Italian joints that line Mulberry and Mott Streets. Of course, we've added our own touches, replacing Calabrian chilis with Szechuan peppercorns, beef with chicken, and killing the tomatoes entirely. The spirit's there, though, and it comes through the bowl clearly.

2 tablespoons neutral oil
 ½ Spanish onion, finely chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
 12 ounces ground chicken thigh
 2 tablespoons white miso paste
 ½ teaspoon crushed chili flakes
 ¼ teaspoon ground Szechuan peppercorn
 ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
 ½ teaspoon chili powder
 3 tablespoons aji-mirin cooking wine
 1½ tablespoons Chinese black vinegar
 2½ teaspoons sugar
 ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
 ¼ cup water
 1½ teaspoons light soy sauce
 ½ teaspoon cornstarch
 1 pound Chinese lo mein noodles, cooked
 2 scallions, sliced, for garnish
 10 to 15 fresh cilantro leaves for garnish
 4 teaspoons pickled red chilis for garnish
 1 teaspoon fried garlic for garnish

HEAT the neutral oil in a medium pot over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger and sweat for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Do not let them develop any color. Add the ground chicken and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through.

ADD the miso paste, crushed chili flakes, ground Szechuan peppercorn, white pepper, and chili powder. Stir to combine and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the aji-mirin, black vinegar, sugar, salt, and water and bring to a boil over medium heat.

MEANWHILE, in a small bowl, whisk the soy sauce into the cornstarch to create a slurry.

ONCE the mixture in the pot is boiling, add the cornstarch slurry and return to a boil, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat.

USE an immersion blender to pulse the mixture 2 or 3 times to combine. Alternatively, take 1 cup of the mixture

and pulse in a blender 1 or 2 times, making sure to maintain the texture of the chicken (do not blend into a smooth paste). Return the blended mixture to the pot and stir to combine.

TOP the noodles with the sauce mixture and garnish with scallions, cilantro, pickled chilis, and fried garlic.

HO FUN NOODLE SOUP WITH CHINESE GREENS

SERVES 4

Of course, not all noodles are lo mein. In this soul-warming noodle soup, we use a freshly made rice noodle from Guangdong called ho fun. They're like a warm, comfy scarf, but for your mouth, and also slippery. You'll also see them listed as *chow fun*, which refers to these noodles after they're cooked in a wok. We used to buy ours from Fong On, that is, before Paul remade the shop focused more on tofu. Now we get them from Kong Kee Food on Grand Street in New York's Chinatown.

1 recipe Edamame Dumpling Broth, strained

1 pound yu choy (Chinese greens)

1 pound ho fun noodles, just cooked

2 scallions, sliced, for garnish

10 to 15 fresh cilantro leaves for garnish

HEAT the broth in a pot. Add the yu choy and cook for 2 minutes.

REMOVE the soup and greens to a serving bowl. Add the warm ho fun noodles. Garnish with the scallions and cilantro.

BALLS

The pleasure of balls (yuk) is self-explanatory to anyone who has eaten them. They are pleasant to hold. Easy to eat. A cinch to make. Chinese people being Chinese people, there's also some vague association with them bringing good luck during Chinese New Year. But we make balls year-round.

Balls are essentially Master Fillings that have moved out and are living off in the world alone, without the codependence on a

wrapper. Shrimp Master Filling, I'm so proud of you! The secret is a good flour dredge and a well-maintained oil temperature to turn them golden brown. Balls also, by the way, make a cameo later in the book, in the Dessert chapter—but it's important to note those balls and these balls share only shape and name. While those conform to the traditional filling and wrapper duality, these are free from all such notions.

SHRIMP BALLS

MAKES 20

1 recipe Shrimp Master Filling

3 cups all-purpose flour

Neutral oil for frying

FORM the filling into twenty 1½-inch balls. Sift the flour into a large bowl and lightly dredge the balls one at a time in the flour. Place the dredged balls on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet as they are ready. It's best to dredge right before frying.

WHILE you're forming the balls, fill a deep pot or wok with enough oil to submerge the shrimp balls. Heat to 375°F over medium-high heat.

WORKING in batches of 3 to 5 and making sure they don't touch, fry the shrimp balls for approximately 10 minutes, until golden brown. Remove from the oil with a spider, drain the shrimp balls on paper towels, and serve immediately.

VARIATION:

SHRIMP AND BACON BALLS

But why, I wonder, would you ever have shrimp balls when you can have shrimp and bacon balls? For this variation, simply wrap each shrimp ball with a half strip of bacon before it goes into the flour dredge. The bacon adheres to itself, like pork Velcro.

VARIATION:**FRIED SHRIMP CRAB CLAW BALLS****MAKES 20**

The fried crab claw is basically a shrimp ball with a crab claw handle. It's like a seafood lollipop. This preparation most likely trickled down from fancier teahouses and banquet halls where the entire ball was likely made of crab meat. It's kinda like how paper doilies remind you of real lace—it's a gesture toward luxury. Today it's common to simply stick the crab claw—we buy our snow crab cocktail claws from Tanners Seafood, an online shop—into a shrimp ball and fry as per normal. This isn't to say, by the way, that the claw is simply cosmetic. After the coating has been eaten, the already-peeled exposed crab claw is yours for eating. A small but delightful bit of meat will reward you.

1 recipe Shrimp Master Filling**3 cups all-purpose flour****6 large frozen snow crab claws, thawed****Neutral oil for frying**

FORM the filling into twenty 2½-inch balls, placing them on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet as you go. Sift the flour into a large bowl and lightly dredge the balls, one at a time, in the flour. Stick a crab claw, base side first, into the center of each ball so the pincers are sticking out. Secure the filling with the opposite hand by pressing it firmly around the base of the claw. Place the dredged balls on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet as they are ready. It's best to dredge right before frying.

WHILE you're forming the balls, fill a deep pot or wok with enough oil to submerge the shrimp balls. Heat to 375°F over medium-high heat

WORKING in batches and making sure they don't touch, fry the balls for 13 to 15 minutes, until golden brown. Remove from the oil using a spider, drain the balls on paper towels, and serve immediately.

EGG FRIED RICE ARANCINI WITH SAMBAL KEWPIE

MAKES 25 ARANCINI

Whether this is a ball or fried rice was the cause of much debate within the Nom Wah family—debate that stretched for hours on end and finished when I said, “Meh, I think ball.” For her part, though, Julie Cole, who developed the recipe in collaboration with the schmancy members’ club Soho House for a high tea, thinks they’re egg fried rice. Well, just like sometimes a very new raisin is a very old grape, sometimes egg fried rice in ball form is both things at once. That’s called a dialectic.

FOR THE ARANCINI:

2¼ cups sweet potato starch
¼ cup Chinese pork seasoning, Tomax brand recommended
1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for sprinkling
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon garlic powder
6 large eggs
4 cups panko breadcrumbs
5 cups Egg Fried Rice, cold
Neutral oil for frying

FOR THE SAMBAL KEWPIE:

2 cups Kewpie mayonnaise
½ cup sambal oelek
1 teaspoon kosher salt

FOR THE GARNISH:

¼ cup loosely packed freshly picked cilantro leaves

TO MAKE THE ARANCINI:

IN a medium bowl, combine the sweet potato starch, Chinese pork seasoning, salt, black pepper, and garlic powder. Stir gently to

combine. Beat the eggs in another medium bowl and put the breadcrumbs in a third bowl.

PUT the egg fried rice in a large bowl, along with about ½ cup of the starch mixture, ½ cup of the egg (about 2 beaten eggs), and ½ cup of the breadcrumbs and stir to combine. Add equal amounts of each mixture, as needed, until the rice adheres to itself but is not visibly wet or very dry/crumblly.

FORM balls of the fried rice mixture about 1 inch in diameter (about half the size of a golf ball). As the balls are formed, place on a plate or sheet tray, leaving space between each, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 2 hours.

IN a tall, heavy-bottomed pot, heat 2 inches of neutral oil over medium heat to 350°F.

ONE at a time, dip the fried rice balls into the potato starch mixture, then the egg mixture, then the panko, draining off the excess of each component before dipping into the

next. Return them to the tray as they are coated.

ONCE all of the balls are coated, carefully drop them in the oil, 4 or 5 at a time. Fry for 3 to 4 minutes, until golden brown. Remove from the oil with a spider and transfer to a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Immediately sprinkle with salt. Repeat until all the arancini are fried.

TO MAKE THE SAMBAL KEWPIE AND SERVE:

WHILE the arancini are frying, in a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, sambal oelek, and salt. Stir to combine.

SERVE the arancini with the sambal Kewpie alongside, or use a squeeze bottle to dot the top of the arancini with the sambal Kewpie. Garnish with fresh picked cilantro leaves.

CHEF'S SPECIALS

Not all dim sum abides by the bifurcation of wrapping and wrapped, vehicle and passenger.

Chef's specials are what we call everything that defies a category. They are special, and they are made by our chef, of course. But

beyond that, they are a varied crew. Some, like the chicken feet, are traditional dim sum snacks. Others, like the pork chops and salt-and-pepper shrimp, are larger-format plates that we've added over the years as our hours have extended dinner-wardly.

CHICKEN FEET

MAKES 20

Sometimes you will hear this ingredient referred to as Phoenix Claws, but it is actually chicken feet (鳳爪). And I get that you may be skeptical of their culinary value, but these crispy chicken feet are actually delicious, covert vehicles for the subtle sauce they come with. Yes, they are gelatinous and full of cartilage and bones. They are, after all, feet. But Chinese chefs do not waste food—and they turn off-cuts into delicacies. The multistep cooking process—boiling, marinating, and frying—renders the meat tender and succulent. They'll, um, knock you off your feet. I apologize. I, Wilson Tang, apologize for that terrible Dad joke. (But they will.)

20 chicken feet

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon sugar

½ teaspoon rice wine vinegar

1 tablespoon light soy sauce

2 teaspoons cornstarch

Neutral oil for frying

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

2 scallions, finely chopped

1½ teaspoons oyster sauce

2 star anise pods

1 tablespoon diced bell pepper, for garnish

5 fermented black beans (dau si), for garnish

USING either a cleaver or kitchen shears, cut off the claws and any dirty or discolored parts of the chicken feet.

BRING a large pot of water to a boil and add the salt, sugar, and rice vinegar. Add the

chicken feet and cook for about 2 minutes just to further clean. Remove from the pot using a spider and drain thoroughly.

PLACE the chicken feet in a large bowl. Add the soy sauce and cornstarch, toss to combine, cover, and marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

FILL a wok or heavy-bottomed pan one third of the way up with neutral oil and heat over medium heat to 350°F. Fill a large bowl halfway with ice and water. Add the chicken feet to the oil and fry until golden, approximately 8 minutes. Using a spider, transfer the feet to the bowl of ice water and leave for 2 to 3 hours. This will make the skin fluffy.

REMOVE the chicken feet from the water. Prepare a steamere. Add the chicken

feet (they should all fit) and steam for 15 minutes.

IN a small bowl, combine the garlic, scallions, oyster sauce, and star anise and pour over the chicken feet. Continue to steam for another 30 to 40 minutes until skin falls easily from chicken feet.

TRANSFER the chicken feet and sauce to a

deep pot. Add 1 cup of water to cover the feet and bring to a simmer. Cover and braise for 15 minutes, then remove the cover, increase the heat, and cook for about 5 minutes to thicken the sauce. Garnish with bell pepper and black beans and serve immediately.

STUFFED EGGPLANT

SERVES 4

This is one of my favorite uses of Shrimp Master Filling because it shows how anything can become a wrapper. Take eggplant, for instance. We usually think of eggplant as the filler. We canny Cantonese have made the eggplant into the bun for a shrimpy payload.

8 fairy tale eggplants
1 recipe Shrimp Master Filling
1 cup hot water
½ cup oyster sauce
Neutral oil for frying
1 bunch scallions, diced

PREPARE the eggplant by trimming off the stems and ¼ inch from the bottoms. Split lengthwise, cutting two-thirds of the way through.

STUFF each of the cavities with 2 tablespoons of the filling, patting it down well so it won't fall out.

IN a small bowl, prepare the sauce by mixing the hot water with the oyster sauce.

HEAT 3 inches of oil in a Dutch oven to 375°F over medium-high heat. Add the eggplant two at a time and fry for 5 to 7 minutes, until the filling is golden. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.

PLACE on a serving platter, drizzle with the oyster sauce, and scatter with the scallions.

SALT-AND-PEPPER SHRIMP

SERVES 4 TO 5

Salt-and-pepper shrimp is a traditional Cantonese preparation and just as simple as it sounds. This is also classic Wun Gaw: Wun Gaw, a man who cooks using only one cleaver and a plastic teaspoon. But as this dish shows, he doesn't need anything else. The alchemy here is in the succulent shrimp, the crispy crust, and the Chinese five-spice powder (a blend of star anise, cloves, cinnamon, fennel, and Szechuan peppercorn). This recipe will give you plenty of salt and five-spice powder to use later.

Neutral oil for frying
1 pound large unpeeled shrimp
(8 to 12 shrimp)
1 tablespoon potato starch
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
1½ cups kosher salt
1 cup shredded iceberg or romaine lettuce
1 cup shredded carrots

IN a deep skillet or wok, heat 2 inches of oil over medium-high heat to 350°F.

MEANWHILE, use a pair of kitchen shears to cut the shells in order to devein the shrimp (don't remove the shells completely). Trim off the heads if they have them.

IN a large bowl, mix the potato starch with the water until dissolved. Add the shrimp and coat, inside and out, with the mixture.

IN a small bowl, mix together the five-spice powder and salt.

ADD the shrimp to the hot oil and fry for about 2 minutes or until opaque, agitating them after a minute. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate and pat dry.

MOVE the shrimp to a clean large bowl and toss with 2 tablespoons of the salt and five-spice mixture.

PLACE the shrimp on a bed of lettuce and carrots and serve immediately, along with the extra salt and five-spice mixture for sprinkling.

SALT-AND-PEPPER PORK CHOPS (AND ITS FRIEND SWEET-AND-SOUR PORK CHOPS)

SERVES 4 TO 6

Wun Gaw once explained to me that he didn't come to the kitchen to fulfill some sort of life passion or to express himself artistically. "That's an American fairy tale," he scoffed. He started working in kitchens because there was nothing else he could do. He used the recipes he knew from back home with the products and proteins available in America. Sweet-and-sour pork chops are a great example, and this recipe proves that delicious doesn't care about the backstory. Even though, admittedly, it can be interesting.

This dish is part of the long lineage of Chinese cooks coming to America and making shit up with what they had. Salt-and-pepper squid is a common preparation throughout China. The salt-and-pepper technique is applied here to pork chops, which are far too extravagant a cut for many cooks in China. After the meat is crispy and crunchy, popping with the flavor from the ample salt and pepper, we run it through a wok with a sweet-and-sour sauce. My favorite thing about it is that it contains A.1. Sauce, the most American of all sauces. I guess that's why sweet-and-sour chops are the most Chinese American of all dishes. They are an addictive main course, with flavors six ways to Sunday.

FOR THE SWEET-AND-SOUR SAUCE

(OPTIONAL):

⅓ cup Koon Chun red vinegar

⅓ cup A.1. Sauce

½ cup honey

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1½ cups water

Dark soy sauce (optional; only to adjust color if it's too red for your liking)

FOR THE PORK:

1 pound medium boneless pork chops

1½ tablespoons Shaoxing wine

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

1 large egg, beaten

½ teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons water

FOR THE COATING:

¼ cup all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons cornstarch

⅛ teaspoon ground white pepper

1½ tablespoons neutral oil

3 tablespoons water

FOR FRYING AND SERVING:

3 cups peanut oil for frying

3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

3 long hot green peppers, sliced crosswise into thin rounds

1 long hot red pepper, sliced crosswise into thin rounds

½ teaspoon coarse sea salt

⅛ teaspoon coarsely ground white pepper

IF YOU'RE MAKING THE SWEET-AND-SOUR SAUCE:

COMBINE the red vinegar, A.1. Sauce, honey, Worcestershire sauce, and water in a small saucepan. Place over medium heat and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Adjust the color of the sauce with dark soy sauce, if desired. Turn off the heat and let sit for 10 minutes, or cool completely and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

TO MAKE THE PORK AND COATING:

COMBINE the pork, Shaoxing wine, toasted sesame oil, egg, salt, and water in a large bowl, and use your hands to mix and coat the pork evenly. Let sit for at least 15 minutes and up to 2 hours.

MOVE the pork to one side of the bowl, add the ingredients for the coating, and mix until you get a loose batter. Combine the pork with the batter until the pork is well coated and set aside.

TO FRY THE PORK AND SERVE:

HEAT 2 inches of neutral oil in a large cast-iron skillet or Dutch oven to about 250°F, or until a piece of garlic tossed in bubbles a little. Add the garlic and cook until it just starts to turn color, about 30 seconds. Using a spoon, scoop it out onto a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Be careful not to brown the garlic or it will be bitter.

HEAT the same oil to 380°F. Working in batches, add the pork and fry until golden brown, approximately 7 to 10 minutes. Using tongs to remove pork, place on a paper towel-lined sheet to drain.

HEAT a wok over very high heat until smoking. Add the green and red peppers, salt, and white pepper and toss for 15 to 30 seconds, until fragrant.

IF you're going for a sweet-and-sour pork chop, add ½ cup of the sweet-and-sour sauce. If not, just keep on going.

TURN off the heat and add the pork chops and fried garlic to the wok. You can now practice your wok skills to toss everything together. Serve immediately with white rice.

STEAMED SPARERIBS

SERVES 4 TO 5

Gweilo—ahem, white people—never talk about gnawing in a good way. It’s always like, “Something is gnawing at me”: pains of growing old, the thought of dying alone, maybe I left the stove on? But we Cantonese, we love a good gnaw. There’s something so satisfying about working a piece of meat or bone over, extracting from it every morsel of flavor. That’s gross, you say, as you twirl your bite-marked pencil between your fingers with your tooth-torn cuticles, and then it dawns on you, maybe you too love the gnaw. Save your fingers and go order the steamed spareribs, in which bone and cartilage and meat are the perfect 1:1:1 ratio. These chewy cubes can be eaten as a snack or within cheung fun or even tossed, if you’d like, with fried rice.

½ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon MSG
 1½ teaspoons sugar
 ½ teaspoon chicken powder
 ½ teaspoon ground white pepper
 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine
 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
 2 pounds spareribs, cut into 1-inch by 1-inch segments
 2 tablespoons potato starch
 1 tablespoon neutral oil
 1 teaspoon fermented black beans
 ¼ large green bell pepper, seeded and roughly chopped
 ¼ large red bell pepper, seeded and roughly chopped

IN a large bowl, combine salt, MSG, sugar, chicken powder, white pepper, wine, and toasted sesame oil. Mix until uniform.

ADD the spareribs and toss until well coated. Add the potato starch and toss again until coated and, finally, add the neutral oil and toss until coated. Sprinkle with the fermented black beans.

SET up a steamer. Steam the spareribs on a plate for 18 minutes, or until cooked through.

MEANWHILE, bring a pot of water to boil. Add the bell peppers and blanch for 30 seconds. Remove from the water with a spider and set aside on a paper towel-lined plate to dry.

REMOVE the spareribs from the steamer, drain any excess water, and top with the bell peppers. Serve immediately.

CHAR SIU FAMILY MEAL

SERVES THE KITCHEN STAFF OF NOM WAH (20 PEOPLE)

Family meal at Nom Wah usually consists of cigarettes smoked on the corner of Doyers Street. Most times, the staff will bring their own food from home plus a bit more to share and there's a very informal potluck. But sometimes, when he's in a good mood, Wun Gaw will cook for everyone. The unanimous favorite is char siu, or Chinese BBQ pork. There are plenty of places in Chinatown that specialize in char siu who have rows of the scarlet red-glazed tenderloins hanging in their windows. But it's actually quite easy to make, and—what with the overnight marinade—it's the perfect weekend project. Make your char siu Sunday night and stretch it out over the week with noodles, bao, and char siu fried rice.

1 (6-pound) pork tenderloin
 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
 2 teaspoons Shaoxing wine
 1½ teaspoons salt
 1 tablespoon MSG
 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon sugar
 ½ teaspoon chicken powder
 ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
 3 tablespoons light soy sauce
 1½ tablespoons oyster sauce
 ½ cup ketchup
 ½ cup hoisin sauce
 1 teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
 ¼ cup yellow food coloring
 ¼ cup red food coloring

CUT the pork tenderloin into 3 equal-sized pieces and score ¼-inch-deep incisions across the tops.

COMBINE the rest of the ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Place the pork in the marinade, tossing to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or overnight.

WHEN ready to cook, preheat the oven to 350°F.

PLACE the pork in a roasting pan and cook for 45 minutes to 1 hour, flipping after the first 20 minutes, until the internal temperature of the pork reaches 145°F.

REMOVE the pork from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes. Slice into ¼-inch strips and serve. (Or use for bao filling.)

FEASTS

 couple times a year, Wally has people over to his social club, the Tong On Association. I love it. I'm the youngest guy in the room, and, being forty-one, that's no longer something I get to say very often. The dinner takes place on the third floor in a sort of rec room with eight or nine circular tables. All the old-timers are there, guys Wally has grown old with since he came to New York. Wun Gaw comes over from Nom Wah to hang out too. He's in charge of the kitchen. He plays cards. He smokes. He drinks. It's great to see him let loose a little, and it's fun to see him not making dumplings.

Before he arrived at Nom Wah, Wally worked at a few Cantonese banquet-style restaurants, and here he draws from that repertoire. Some Chinese banquets are formal affairs, proceeding with an elaborate order and full of auspicious symbols. Most, for instance, have eight courses, since eight is considered the luckiest number in China. There's this whole thing about how you as a guest have to compliment the host in a certain way and they have to apologize and yadda yadda yadda. But at Uncle Wally's, everything is pretty freeform. Especially when the Costco-sized bottles of Johnnie Walker Red appear and the hardcore games

of Chinese poker start. By then, don't look for Wun Gaw in the kitchen. But before all that, he cooks like a madman. The following recipes come from this off-hours Wun Gaw, Wun Gaw with his boys and among friends.

Banquets like these, by the way, are happening in Chinatown in social clubs and civic associations and at charity events all the time. And it warms my heart. One of the hidden blessings of the Chinese community's longtime battle with discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society is that we've come to rely on one another. Pretty much everything you see in Chinatown, when you scratch the surface, isn't the result of any particular Great Man. Instead, it relies on an interconnected web of alliance and affiliation and interdependence. And these bonds are resilient and still much-needed. In some cases, our ancestors were incredibly successful at integrating into their communities, and the mission of these gatherings is now simply to preserve our culture and traditions. But in many others, these benevolent societies and village-based social clubs still provide lifelines to thousands of immigrants who would otherwise lack a social net. It makes me kinda weepy. Let's talk about walnut shrimp.

WALNUT SHRIMP

SERVES 4 TO 5

This walnut shrimp recipe, which is seriously addictive, will strike a chord in the hearts of any Chinese kid who went with their parents to banquets such as these—banquets that lasted late into the night, way past bedtime. And you still had to go to Chinese school in the morning! Thankfully, walnut shrimp is the kind of recipe that kids go nuts for, so it wasn't all bad. And if you want to know the secret to this dish: it's not exactly "authentic." But in my mind, Wun Gaw is as authentic as it gets, so whatever Wun Gaw makes is authentic. Ergo, this walnut shrimp is worth your time.

¼ teaspoon salt, plus more for boiling the shrimp

Neutral oil for frying

¼ teaspoon MSG

1 pound large shrimp (8 to 12), shelled and deveined

1 large egg white, beaten

1½ teaspoons potato starch

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 cup all-purpose flour

1¾ cups water

6 tablespoons sugar

1 cup walnut halves or whole pecans

Florets from 1 head broccoli (approximately 1½ pounds)

1 cup mayonnaise

Juice of ½ lemon

BRING a large pot of salted water to a boil.

MEANWHILE, in a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat enough neutral oil to submerge the shrimp to 350°F.

AS the oil heats, combine the salt and MSG in a large bowl and mix well. Add the shrimp and toss until well coated, then add the egg white and toss again to coat. Add the potato starch to the shrimp and toss to coat once more, and then the vegetable oil and toss to coat a final time.

IN a separate large bowl, mix together the flour and 1½ cups of the water to form a liquidy paste and set aside.

COMBINE the remaining ¼ cup water and the sugar in a small saucepan and bring to boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat and simmer for 3 to 4 minutes to make a simple syrup.

ADD the walnuts (or pecans) to the hot oil and fry for 3 to 5 minutes or until dark brown. Drain on paper towels, then add to the pot of simple syrup. Toss to coat and stir over low heat until there is no loose syrup

left in the pan and the walnuts are crunchy. Transfer the walnuts to a plate and set aside.

ADD the coated shrimp to the boiling water until halfway cooked, about 1 minute.

Remove from the water with a spider and drain onto a paper towel-lined plate. Quickly blanch the broccoli in the same boiling water, approximately 1 minute. Remove, drain, and set aside.

MAKE sure your frying oil is at 350°F. Toss the shrimp in the flour mixture, then add to the

oil and fry for approximately 1½ minutes, until lightly golden. Remove the shrimp from the fryer using a spider and drain onto a paper towel-lined plate.

IN a large bowl, combine the mayonnaise and lemon juice. Add the shrimp and toss until well coated. To serve, place the broccoli florets into a ring on the plate. Spoon the shrimp at the center and scatter with the walnuts.

CANTONESE-STYLE BEEF FILET

SERVES 4 TO 5

What we call Cantonese-style beef filet holds in it an entire story of immigration and colonialization. The dish itself comes from Hong Kong, where largely Cantonese chefs were inspired by the dining habits and ingredients of the West. These included two of the most Western-y things: steak and ketchup. As many of those chefs immigrated to the United States—including Wally and Wun Gaw—they brought this recipe with them.

2 pounds flank steak
¼ teaspoon baking soda
2 tablespoons plus 1½ teaspoons water
1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger
1½ tablespoons light soy sauce
2 heaping tablespoons potato starch
4 tablespoons neutral oil
½ medium white onion, roughly chopped
1 cup sweet-and-sour sauce

CUT the steak in half lengthwise, and then into ½-inch slices on a bias. Using a meat tenderizer, pound each slice of meat to ⅛ inch thick. Pat dry with paper towels.

IN a small bowl, combine the baking soda with 1½ teaspoons of the water and stir to dissolve.

SMASH the ginger with the tenderizer or the flat side of a knife and, using your hand (or a citrus press), squeeze the juice into the baking soda mixture. Add the soy sauce and mix well.

IN a large bowl, toss the meat with 1 heaping tablespoon of the potato starch until evenly

coated. Add 3 tablespoons of the neutral oil and toss again to coat. Add the ginger and soy marinade, toss once more, then cover the meat in plastic wrap and let sit, refrigerated, for at least 30 minutes or overnight.

WHEN ready to cook, let the meat come to room temperature, about 30 minutes. Heat a large skillet until very hot. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon neutral oil over high and heat until shimmering. Add the meat and stir-fry for 5 minutes until browned. Remove to a plate and set aside.

ADD the onion to the skillet and cook over high heat for approximately 1 minute, until translucent. Add the sweet-and-sour sauce and toss to coat.

IN a small bowl, combine the remaining 1 heaping tablespoon of potato starch with the remaining 2 tablespoons water. Mix well, then add to the skillet with the onions and sauce. Return the meat to the skillet and mix everything together to combine. Transfer to a platter and serve immediately.

CANTONESE-STYLE TARO AND PORK BELLY CASSEROLE

SERVES 10

Another mid banquet home run, this casserole relies on the complementary flavors and textures of taro and pork belly: one meaty, the other earthy; one chewy, the other tender; one Lilo, the other Stitch. The key is to allow the taro to soften to the cusp of dissolution and make the pork belly crisp on the skin side and melt-in-your-mouth soft on the fat side.

5 pounds pork belly, skin on
 1 tablespoon dark soy sauce
 1 tablespoon neutral oil
 6 pounds fresh taro, peeled and cut into ¼ by 3 by 1-inch slices
 1 teaspoon salt
 2 teaspoons MSG
 4 teaspoons sugar
 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine
 1¼ tablespoons toasted sesame oil
 ¾ teaspoon chicken powder
 ½ teaspoon ground white pepper
 ½ teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
 2 cups fermented bean curd

BRING a large pot of water to a boil.

Submerge the pork belly in the boiling water for 2 minutes to clean it. Remove from the pot and place in a colander. Rinse under cold water.

USING a siu yuk poker (a needle or skewer works just as well), poke holes in the skin of the pork belly. (This will make the skin crispy after cooking.)

IN a large bowl, toss the pork belly with the soy sauce to coat.

MEANWHILE, heat the neutral oil in a large skillet to 350°F over medium-high heat. Add

the pork belly and fry for 2 minutes on each side. Remove from the oil and set aside on a paper towel-lined plate.

MAKING sure your oil is still at 350°F, add the taro (working in batches, if needed) and fry for about 2 minutes, until lightly browned. Remove and drain on a paper towel-lined tray.

ONCE the pork belly is cool enough to handle, cut it into 3-inch strips. Place in a large bowl and mix with the taro.

IN a small bowl, combine the salt, MSG, sugar, wine, toasted sesame oil, chicken powder, white pepper, five-spice powder, and fermented bean curd. Stir until the bean curd is broken up. Pour over the pork belly and taro mixture and toss until coated.

ON a heat-safe tray, alternate tiles of pork belly and taro root, tightly packed. You can use multiple trays. Using the steaming method, steam the trays in batches for 30 minutes, or until tender.

USING a spatula or your hands, transfer the pork belly to the platter, maintaining the alternating pattern. Pour the remaining sauce on top and serve.

SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS AND LETTUCE

SERVES 6 TO 8

It's rather unusual to find veggie-forward dishes at Chinese banquets since these dishes are associated with austerity. However, this classic Cantonese combination gets the nod because shiitake mushrooms—and mushrooms in general—are associated with good health and longevity. In this astonishingly easy entrée, rehydrated mushrooms are complemented by boiled lettuce and glazed to a high sheen.

2 ounces dried shiitake mushrooms
 ¼ cup neutral oil
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly crushed
 4 thin slices fresh ginger, ⅛ inch thick
 2 cups chicken broth
 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
 1 teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 1 teaspoon Shaoxing wine
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 head iceberg lettuce, quartered
 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
 3 scallions, thinly sliced (optional)

SUBMERGE mushrooms in hot water for 20–25 minutes until tender. Reserve soaking water.

MEANWHILE, in a large pot, heat 2 tablespoons of the neutral oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and ginger and cook for 2 minutes, or until fragrant.

ADD the rehydrated mushrooms and cook for an additional minute. Add the chicken

broth, oyster sauce, sugar, black pepper, and Shaoxing wine. Bring to a boil and boil for 2 minutes, then lower the heat to a simmer and cook uncovered for 1 hour, stirring occasionally and adding some of the reserved soaking water as needed to maintain a thick sauce.

WHEN the mushrooms are almost done, the flesh will look slightly translucent. Turn off the heat. Fill a pot with enough water to submerge the lettuce and bring to a boil. Add the salt and remaining 2 tablespoons neutral oil. Add the lettuce, cover, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, until the lettuce is tender. Drain excess water, pat dry with paper towels, and arrange the lettuce leaves on a serving platter.

TURN the heat under the mushrooms back up to medium-high. Add the toasted sesame oil and scallions. Stir for 1 minute, then pour the braised mushrooms onto the bed of cooked lettuce.

PEKING DUCK

SERVES 4

Walk through Chinatown and the eyes of a thousand Peking ducks follow you from their resting place in storefront windows. Making Peking duck isn't easy and it's not part of the dim sum canon—and yet, Julie, our chef at Nom Wah Nolita, had an indomitable curiosity and several strokes of brilliance. She came up with this at-home recipe that avoids the traditional wood-fired oven because, well, who has a wood-fired oven? Miraculously, the conventional oven still achieves the perfect crispiness for the duck. They are traditionally served with mandarin pancakes, but we like to serve them in mantao with hoisin sauce, cucumbers, and scallions.

1 duck (5 to 6 pounds)
 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
 1 gallon hot water
 2 tablespoons honey
 3 tablespoons oyster sauce
 2 tablespoons Chinese five-spice powder
 3 tablespoons light soy sauce
 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 ½ cup seeded julienned cucumber, for garnish
 ½ cup julienned scallions, for garnish
 ½ cup hoisin sauce for serving
 Mantao for serving

PRICK the duck all over the whole surface with a fork, piercing the skin but not the flesh. This yields a crispy skin.

IN a bowl large enough to fit the duck, mix the vinegar with the hot water. Place the duck in the bowl and soak for 5 minutes.

TRANSFER the duck to a wire rack to drain and pat with paper towels until extremely dry.

IN a small bowl, mix together the honey, oyster sauce, five-spice powder, soy sauce, and brown sugar. Using a pastry brush, brush the sauce all over the duck, including inside the cavity.

LET the sauce dry for 15 minutes, then brush again. Repeat until you are left with about 5 tablespoons sauce. Refrigerate the duck uncovered for at least 8 hours or overnight.

PREHEAT the oven to 350°F.

PLACE the duck on a baking rack set inside a roasting pan. Brush the underside of the duck with half of the remaining sauce and roast for 45 minutes. Flip the duck over and brush with the remaining sauce. Roast for another 45 minutes until internal temperature reads 165°F. Remove from the oven and let cool.

SERVE with julienned scallions, mantao, and hoisin on the side for dipping.

VEGETABLES

Traditionally the working-class Cantonese diet was largely vegetable-based. Thanks to the blessings of poverty! Now, for many of the Chinese immigrants who've made the journey from poor to middle class, meat consumption is a status symbol. Good for esteem; terrible for arteries. Interestingly, at Nom Wah, we get the bulk of our vegan and vegetarian requests from younger non-Chinese clientele. And

we're more than happy to accommodate since the dim sum repertoire has its share of veggie-forward (and otherwise green) options. Most Cantonese cooking relies on leafy greens: bok choy, choy sum (Chinese flowering cabbage), and gai lan (Chinese broccoli, which is leafy and much sweeter than Western broccoli). The methods for cooking them are all similar, so just go to the veg aisle and go crazy.

TIGER BEER PICKLES

SERVES 7

I'm pretty sure Calvin came up with this recipe the same way ancient picklers came up with theirs: he looked around to see what he had lying around in the way of brines and poured it on. Cal loves beer. He loves Tiger Beer. Ergo, Tiger Beer pickles. The beer adds sweetness; the vinegar does the chemical work of fermentation; and that sambal oelek adds a kick in the pants of spice.

½ tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
 1 tallboy can of Tiger Beer
 4 cups distilled white vinegar
 2 cups sambal oelek
 2 cups sugar
 4 cups water
 1½ pounds bok choy, quartered
 1 medium carrot, shaved on mandoline
 8 ounces bean sprouts
 6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

SPREAD sesame seeds on a sheet tray and toast oven at 350°F for 10 minutes or until fragrant.

MEANWHILE. in a large bowl, mix together the beer, vinegar, sambal oelek, sugar, and water until the sugar is dissolved.

PLACE the bok choy, carrot, bean sprouts, and garlic in a 12-quart glass jar. Pour the Tiger Beer pickling liquid over the top, making sure the vegetables are submerged.

COVER, put in a cool dry place, and allow to pickle for at least 48 hours. When serving, garnish with the toasted sesame seeds.

CHINESE GREENS WITH OYSTER SAUCE

SERVES 4

2 pounds Chinese broccoli (gai lan) or other leafy greens

2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

½ cup oyster sauce

Toasted sesame seeds for garnish

Fried shallots for garnish, available at most Asian groceries

IF the Chinese broccoli stalks are large, slice the greens lengthwise from leaf to bottom of stem, as many cuts as necessary to get to an edible size.

BRING a large pot of water to a boil.

MEANWHILE, make an ice bath by filling a

bowl three-quarters of the way with half ice and half water. Keep away from the stove so the ice bath doesn't melt.

ONCE the water is boiling, add the greens and cook for 30 seconds to 1 minute, until bright vibrant green. Using tongs, transfer to the ice bath. Let sit for 30 seconds more before draining and transferring to a clean bowl.

DRIZZLE the greens with the toasted sesame oil and oyster sauce and toss to coat. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds and fried shallots and serve.

GARLIC CHILI CUCUMBERS

SERVES 4

These easy-to-make cucumbers have a kick in them and are great for cutting through the fatty richness of dim sum. Use the excess chili sauce to add a kick to any of your other vegetables whenever you wish.

FOR THE GARLIC PASTE:

6 whole cloves garlic, peeled
1½ teaspoons neutral oil

FOR THE CHILI SAUCE:

1½ cups Lao Gan Ma's Spicy Chili Crisp
¾ cup sambal oelek
¾ cup brown sugar
1½ cups distilled white vinegar

FOR THE CUCUMBERS:

4 medium Kirby cucumbers
5 tablespoons chili sauce (see above)
1½ tablespoons light soy sauce
1½ tablespoons Dumpling Dipping Sauce
1 teaspoon salt

TO MAKE THE GARLIC PASTE:

IN a mini food processor, process the garlic and neutral oil until pureed.

TO MAKE THE CHILI SAUCE:

IN a large bowl, combine all the ingredients and mix well.

TO MAKE THE CUCUMBERS:

CUT the tips off the cucumbers. Halve them lengthwise, then quarter them and cut the quarters on an extreme bias into 1-inch-thick pieces.

TOSS cucumbers with 1½ teaspoons of the garlic paste, the chili sauce, the Dumpling Dipping Sauce, and the salt. Cover and refrigerate for 3 to 4 hours before serving.

DESSERTS

The traditional American meal often ends with a carbohololic train wreck called dessert: when all the prudence exhibited earlier on in the day is abandoned for an orgy of sugar, chocolate, and cream. Not so in dim sum. The reasons for this include a) common sense and b) the fact that dim sum was meant to be a fast meal in the morning when no one is going to take the time for an extra course. Also the traditional Southern Chinese palate isn't keen for the saccharine, nor are the Chinese sweet on chocolate. A recent study showed that the Chinese eat on average less than one bar per capita every year.

At most dim sum parlors, it's a chicken-and-egg thing. We are surrounded by a slew of dessert-focused businesses, from the

ice cream and egg waffles at Eggloo to the sponge cakes of Kam Hing Coffee Shop. Did they pop up because dessert is so overlooked on most dim sum menus or are dim sum menus light on dessert because they offer alternatives? But at Nom Wah, dessert is part of our DNA. After all, Uncle Wally rose through the ranks for his proficiency at moon cakes, and for years, we survived almost exclusively on our red bean and lotus pastes. So though not the shimmering patisserie you might find at Dominique Ansel's or the sprinkle-and-chocolate cookies of Veniero's or extravagant cakes of Lady M's, Nom Wah's desserts are not to be missed. They aren't an afterthought. They're an afterword.

FRIED SESAME BALLS WITH LOTUS PASTE

MAKES 20 SESAME BALLS

Basically delicious Chinese profiteroles, jin deui, or sesame balls, are made with glutinous rice, which gives the dough that yielding, slightly gooey texture. This is the perfect foil for the crunch of the sesame seed carapace and the inner payload of sweetened lotus paste (made with lotus seeds, easily gotten at any Asian grocery store.) Well, traditionally it's lotus paste, and that's what we still use, but that's the thing about an empty ball: you can fill it with what you like.

FOR THE LOTUS PASTE:

½ cup dried lotus seeds

⅓ cup sugar

⅛ teaspoon salt

1½ tablespoons lard (can substitute shortening or neutral oil)

FOR THE SESAME BALLS:

½ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar

4½ cups glutinous rice flour

¼ cup lotus seed paste (see above)

⅛ cup sesame seeds

Neutral oil, to fry

TO MAKE THE LOTUS PASTE:

PLACE the lotus seeds into a pot with enough water to submerge the seeds twice over.

Bring to a simmer over medium-low heat, cover, and simmer for 1 hour, or until the seeds are easily mashed with a fork.

USING a slotted spoon, remove the seeds and drain off any excess liquid. Add to a food processor with 2 tablespoons water and

process until a loose, pastelike texture forms. Add additional water, 1 tablespoon at a time, if the mixture seems too thick or chalky.

TRANSFER the paste to a large skillet along with the sugar and salt and cook over low heat, stirring continuously to avoid sticking. When the paste becomes slightly firmer, after about 20 minutes, turn off the heat and fold in the lard. The end product should be shiny, have a texture close to cookie dough, and stick to the spoon. Set aside to cool.

TO MAKE THE SESAME BALLS:

IN a small pan, bring 3 cups of water to a boil. Stir in the sugar until it dissolves and forms a smooth syrup.

IN a large bowl, combine the glutinous rice flour and syrup and knead into a dough.

PLACE half the dough in a large, heavy-bottomed pot and cook over medium heat for 1 minute, or until it starts to become translucent. Add the cooked dough to the

raw dough and knead together on a lightly floured surface until fully incorporated, approximately 3 minutes.

DIVIDE the dough into roughly 1-inch-diameter balls.

SLIGHTLY flatten each piece of dough, put about 1 teaspoon of lotus seed paste in the middle, and close up the ball, rolling it gently between your palms.

FILL a small bowl with cold water and quickly dip each ball in the water before rolling in sesame seeds to coat.

FILL a large pot with enough oil to submerge the balls and heat to 350°F over medium-high heat.

ADD the sesame balls, working in batches if needed, and fry until they're golden brown all over and float to the top of the oil. Using a spider, carefully remove balls and set aside on a paper towel-lined plate to drain before serving.

ALMOND COOKIES

MAKES 18 COOKIES

When I was a kid, Uncle Wally used to sneak me freshly baked almond cookies when we visited Nom Wah. Even when they're just out of the oven, these classic Guangdong treats crumble easily. They all but disappear when dipped into a cup of tea. Years later, when I first heard the expression "That's the way the cookie crumbles," I was confused, since I grew up associating cookies crumbling with the secret joys of Saturday visits to Uncle Wally's. Today, this is one of the few survivors of our days as a bakery, but I keep it on the menu hoping that some future Wilson Tang is forming sweet almond cookie memories at this very moment.

1¼ cups all-purpose flour
¾ cup powdered sugar
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
3 egg yolks (place 2 in one bowl and 1 in another bowl)
½ cup melted lard, cooled to room temperature
1 teaspoon almond extract
18 raw almonds

SIFT the flour, powdered sugar, cornstarch, baking soda, and baking powder into a large bowl. Sift together once more, into another bowl, to make sure the ingredients are well incorporated.

ADD the lard to the bowl of 2 egg yolks and beat until combined. Add the almond extract and stir to combine. Using a rubber spatula, fold this mixture into the dry ingredients, then knead with your hands for

3 to 5 minutes to create a dough ball. Don't overwork the dough or the cookie will lose its flaky texture. Cover and allow the dough to rest for 20 minutes.

MEANWHILE, preheat the oven to 350°F.

SPREAD the almonds on a baking sheet and toast for 5 minutes.

BEAT the remaining egg yolk and set aside.

DIVIDE the dough into 18 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a golf ball-sized ball and transfer to a baking sheet, spacing them at least 2 inches apart.

BRUSH all sides of the dough balls with beaten egg yolk and let sit for 1 minute.

Then brush them once more. Press 1 toasted almond onto the center of each dough ball.

Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until golden.

Remove, let cool for 15 minutes on a baking tray, then serve.

MOON CAKES

MAKES ABOUT 24 MOON CAKES

Moon cakes, or jyut beng, are part of Nom Wah's DNA. Excellence in moon cake-making, gleaned in Hong Kong, is what kept Uncle Wally on and helped him move up with the Choys, Nom Wah's former owners, when he first arrived. It's what kept the bakery going in those long, quiet years when it was more a social club than business concern. Wally's red bean paste—a common moon cake filling—is literally our lifeblood. And yet today we no longer make moon cakes. As the business changed from retail to wholesale and back to retail; as we focused more on savory dim sum, moving away from our original bakery days; as other bakeries have opened specializing in these delicate pastries—shells pressed into molds, insides filled with everything from red bean paste to cured duck eggs and served during the Mid-Autumn Festival—we stopped our own production. And yet I'm not sad about it in the least.

Look, dim sum wasn't ever going anywhere, but that it would flourish was no certain thing. That there would be young Chinese Americans who'd pick up the mantle of what dim sum could be in the United States and build their lives around that promise wasn't assured. And yet . . . and yet recently I met a guy named Guorang Fan. Fan, as he's called, is a handsome thirty-two-year-old kid from Brooklyn who, after a career in e-commerce, decided to get seriously into the dim sum game. Fan, who worked at the legendary Tim Ho Wan, runs a place down in Jacksonville, Florida, called Tim Wah Dim Sum. "I am the Chinese community," he likes to joke. I first met him on Instagram, where I meet everybody these days, when he slid into my DMs. I checked out his feed, which consists either of videos of him doing muscle-ups (he's very strong) or the most beautiful dumplings and moon cakes I've ever seen. What follows is Fan's recipe, and it gives me great joy that people like Fan are out there, people with the hustle and passion to carry on these ancient traditions for a new era.

4¼ cups pastry flour

¾ cup peanut oil

1⅓ cups Lyle's Golden Syrup

1½ tablespoons kansui (alkaline water; you can buy it at any Asian grocery store—we recommend Koon Chun brand)

1 recipe red bean paste or lotus paste

1 large egg, beaten

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

Moon cake mold (available on Amazon)

IN a large bowl, mix together the flour, peanut oil, syrup, and kansui. Knead until a smooth, stiff dough forms, 5 to 10 minutes. Let rest, covered, for 30 minutes.

AFTER the dough is rested, divide it into about 24 Ping-Pong-sized balls (about 10 grams each). Dusting with pastry flour as needed to prevent sticking, flatten them out using a rolling pin or a tortilla press until 1/8 inch thick (about the thickness of a dumpling wrapper).

PLACE a teaspoon-sized ball of bean paste in the center of each wrapper. Pinch the dough around it to close the cake, rolling it loosely between your palms to make a smooth sphere. Just make sure not to have too much dough at the seams.

PLACE each sphere into the moon cake press. If it sticks, dust a little pastry flour on the press.

PREHEAT the oven to 425°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the moon cakes on the prepared baking sheet, leaving about 1 inch between them.

SPRAY a little water on top of each moon cake, then bake them in the oven for 5 minutes, or until they develop a faint yellowish color. Remove from the oven and brush the tops with the beaten egg.

REDUCE the oven temperature to 350°F. Return the moon cakes to the oven and bake for 10 to 12 minutes, until golden brown, rotating the pan 5 minutes through so they bake evenly. Remove from oven and let cool completely. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container for up to a week.

STEAMED DESSERT BUNS

There's a tremendous symmetry to dim sum feasts: you start with a steamed bun filled with char siu, and you end with a steamed bun filled with lotus, red bean, or custard. From the outside, these buns look identical—they use the same dough recipe—but inside each bursts with its own character. As a kid—forced to sit through endless hours of Chinese school, pressured into living up to the ideal of the model minority—I always found this fact strangely moving. Among my favorites is the phoenix bun, with a custard filling made with an abundance of egg yolks. Underneath an obedient exterior, there's some wild shit going on.

STEAMED LOTUS SEED BUNS

MAKES 10 BUNS

1 recipe Basic Bao Dough
1 recipe lotus paste

TO assemble, place 2 tablespoons of filling in each bao and prepare according to the instructions for making bao.

STEAMED RED BEAN BUNS

MAKES 10 BUNS

1 pound dried red (adzuki) beans
3½ cups water
¼ cup neutral oil
1 cup brown sugar
1 recipe Basic Bao Dough

RINSE the adzuki beans and drain. Put them in a large pot and add the water. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, 1½ to 2 hours.

DRAIN the beans, transfer to a food processor, and process into a puree.

IN a large nonstick skillet, heat the neutral oil over medium-low heat. Add the puree and brown sugar and cook, stirring frequently, until a thick paste forms, 30 to 40 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and let cool before using. You can refrigerate the filling for up to 24 hours before using.

TO assemble, place 2 tablespoons of filling in each bao and prepare according to the instructions for making bao.

STEAMED PHOENIX BUNS

MAKES 6 BUNS

FOR THE FILLING:

1 egg yolk
2 salted egg yolks (buy salted duck eggs and discard the whites)
3½ tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1½ tablespoon sugar
1½ tablespoons custard powder
1½ tablespoons milk powder

FOR THE DOUGH:

1⅔ cups all-purpose flour
5 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon active dry yeast
1½ teaspoons neutral oil
½ cup plus 1½ teaspoons whole milk

TO MAKE THE FILLING:

PREPARE a steamer. Carefully slip the egg yolk into a heatproof bowl, add the salted egg yolks, and steam for 12 minutes until solid. Carefully remove the bowl and mash the yolks together until crumbly.

IN a separate bowl, mash the butter flat with a rubber spatula. Fold the sugar into the butter. Sift the custard powder and milk powder into the butter-and-sugar mixture and stir to combine. Add the mashed-up yolks and mix thoroughly. Wrap the filling in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 3 hours.

AFTER 3 hours, divide the filling into 6 equal-sized pieces of about 20 grams (¾ ounce) each. Roll each piece into a ball and place them on a plate, covered, in the refrigerator

for 1 hour.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH AND ASSEMBLE:

IN a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, yeast, and neutral oil and stir together with a pair of chopsticks.

ADD about half of the milk into the mixture. Mix thoroughly, add the remaining milk, and mix again. Use your hands to bring the mixture together into a sticky ball of dough. Turn the dough onto a work surface and continue kneading for about 10 minutes, until it is pliable and no longer sticky.

DIVIDE the dough into 6 equal-sized pieces and shape them into balls. Cover with plastic wrap after each is made.

TO form your buns, flatten the balls of dough so that the sides are a bit thinner than the centers. This helps prevent the filling from bursting out when steaming.

PLACE a piece of filling into the center of the dough and pinch the dough closed around it, rolling it loosely in your palms to form a smooth ball. Let the buns sit at room temperature for 35 minutes.

PREPARE a steamer. Add the buns and steam for 10 minutes until firm with a bit of give, leaving the lid ajar just slightly. This will help keep the filling runny rather than custardy. Turn off the heat and let the buns sit for 3 minutes before serving.