

BIG IDEAS

Mapo tofu tucked into a delicately chewy homemade wrapper becomes a spicy dumpling.

TRAVEL POLL WINNER

Dish to master: DUMPLINGS

THE GASTRONAUT FILES

Proudly Inauthentic Dumplings

Mapo tofu, chicken with cashew and more delicious fillings.

CARA STADLER IS OBSESSED with transforming each of her favorite dishes into a single bite. So after the success of her first restaurant, Tao Yuan, in Brunswick, Maine, she opened Bao Bao Dumpling House in Portland. There she invents dumplings with fillings like mapo tofu and chicken with cashew. She sees no contradiction in offering more traditional dumplings alongside those originals, like the pork-and-shrimp ones she learned from her mother. "Truly, nothing is authentic," she says. "Everyone has a different opinion on what a dumpling should be." In her opinion, the dumplings on the next page are ideal: salty, savory, spicy and juicy all at once, with delicately chewy homemade wrappers. —SARAH DIGREGORIO

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOHN KERNICK; FOOD STYLIST: SIMON ANDREWS; STYLE EDITOR: SUZIE MYERS



A small rolling pin (available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) makes it easier to prep the dumpling wrappers.

Make the Dumpling Wrappers

Active: 30 min; Total: 1 hr 30 min; Makes about 3 dozen wrappers

Stadler's recipe results in exceptionally delicate and chewy dumpling skins. However, if pressed for time, you could also use store-bought wrappers.

1. Put 1¼ cups all-purpose flour into a medium bowl. Slowly drizzle in ¾ cup boiling water and mix with a wooden spoon until the mixture just comes together. Turn it out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until a smooth dough forms, 5 minutes. Return the dough to the bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let rest at room temperature for at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours.
2. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and, using a sharp knife, cut it into 36 equal pieces (9 to 10 grams each). Roll each piece into a ball. Using a small, lightly floured rolling pin, roll out 1 ball of dough to a

⅛-inch-thick round, then roll out just the outer edge until it is ⅛ inch thick and the wrapper is 3½ inches in diameter. (To hold the filling properly, the wrapper should be slightly thicker in the center than at the edge.)

3. Transfer the wrapper to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and cover with a damp kitchen towel. Repeat with the remaining balls of dough.

MAKE AHEAD The dough can be refrigerated for 2 days. Bring to room temperature before rolling out. ➤

STAY CONNECTED

SIGN UP FOR OUR FREE EMAIL NEWSLETTERS AT [FOODANDWINE.COM](https://www.foodandwine.com)

FWx

Get secrets worth sharing with this insider's guide to eating drinking and carrying on.



A guide to travel destinations, inspired getaways and incredible restaurants around the globe.

The
**F&W
DAILY**

One sensational dish served fresh every day.

the
DISH

Receive the latest on food, restaurants and trends.

 **THE WINE LIST**

Weekly pairings, best bottles to buy and the latest news in the wine world.



@foodandwine

Choose a Filling

Total: 40 min; Makes about 3 cups (for 3 dozen dumplings)

Spicy Mapo Tofu

- 7 oz. firm tofu, drained
- 4 dried chiles de árbol, stemmed
- 1 tsp. Sichuan peppercorns
- ½ lb. fatty ground pork, preferably pork butt
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup minced peeled fresh ginger
- ½ cup finely chopped flowering chives
- ¼ cup black bean paste with chile
- 1 Tbsp. ground bean sauce
- 1 Tbsp. tobanjan (fermented broad-bean paste)
- 3 Tbsp. Shaoxing wine
- 1 large egg white
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 Tbsp. cornstarch

1. Cut the tofu into ¼-inch-thick slices; put them on a paper towel-lined plate and press dry with paper towels. Finely chop the tofu and transfer to a large bowl.
2. In a spice grinder, combine the chiles and Sichuan peppercorns and finely grind. Add to the tofu in the bowl along with all of the remaining ingredients except the cornstarch. Fold gently until well blended. Fold in the cornstarch just until incorporated.

Pork and Shrimp

- ¾ oz. dried shiitake mushroom caps
- ½ lb. fatty ground pork, preferably pork butt
- ½ lb. shelled and deveined large shrimp, finely chopped
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- ⅓ cup finely chopped canned water chestnuts (about 5)
- 2 Tbsp. minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1½ Tbsp. soy sauce
- 1½ Tbsp. Shaoxing wine
- ½ Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- ½ Tbsp. sugar
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 large egg white
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch

1. In a medium bowl, cover the mushrooms with boiling water and let stand, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 15 minutes. Drain well, then squeeze out any excess water. Finely chop the mushrooms.
2. In a large bowl, combine the mushrooms with all of the remaining ingredients except the cornstarch and fold gently until well blended. Fold in the cornstarch just until incorporated.

Chicken and Cashew

- ¾ lb. skin-on, boneless chicken thighs
- ¾ oz. dried shiitake mushroom caps
- ⅓ cup diced canned water chestnuts
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions
- ⅓ cup chopped salted cashews
- 1½ Tbsp. minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1½ Tbsp. soy sauce
- 1½ Tbsp. hoisin sauce
- 2 tsp. Shaoxing wine
- 1 tsp. Sriracha
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1 large egg white
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 tsp. cornstarch

1. Cut the chicken into ¼-inch pieces and spread on a baking sheet. Freeze until firm but not frozen, 40 minutes.
2. In a food processor, in 2 batches, pulse the chicken until coarsely ground.
3. In a bowl, cover the mushrooms with boiling water and let stand, 15 minutes. Drain; squeeze out water; finely chop.
4. In a large bowl, combine the ground chicken with the mushrooms and all the remaining ingredients except the cornstarch; fold gently to combine. Fold in the cornstarch just until incorporated.

A Pleating Tutorial

Stadler only pleats her dumplings twice on one side, an easy shape to master and one that lends itself to pan-frying.



1

LAY A WRAPPER in the palm of one hand. Using your finger, brush the outer edge of the wrapper with water. Spoon 1 heaping tablespoon of filling in the center. Fold the wrapper over the filling to form a half-moon; pinch at the top to adhere.



2

FOLD A PLEAT in the dough on the top left, angling back toward the center. Press with your fingers to adhere.



3

MAKE A SECOND PLEAT. Repeat on the top right to meet the first pleat in the center. Transfer the dumpling to a parchment-lined baking sheet and cover with plastic wrap; repeat with the rest of the wrappers and filling.



The simple shape of these dumplings provides a lot of surface area for them to crisp in the pan.

Pausing the pan-frying to briefly steam the dumplings allows them to cook evenly.



Cook the Dumplings

Total: 20 min; Makes about 3 dozen

Stadler's favorite method for perfectly cooked, crisp-bottomed dumplings is fry-steam-fry. It's the classic way to prepare pot stickers.

1. Pour enough canola oil into a large non-stick skillet to cover the bottom. Arrange some of the dumplings in the skillet with a non-pleated side down (you will need to work in batches). Cook over low heat until golden on the bottom, about 3 minutes.

2. Carefully pour in enough water to reach halfway up the dumplings. Cover and cook until almost all of the water is absorbed and the filling is cooked through, about 4 minutes. Uncover and cook until all of the liquid has evaporated and the dumplings

are crispy on the bottom, about 2 minutes longer. Carefully invert onto a plate. Repeat the process with the remaining dumplings. Serve warm.

MAKE AHEAD The fillings can be refrigerated overnight. The assembled, uncooked dumplings can be frozen for up to 1 month and cooked from frozen. Just add 2 minutes to the covered cooking time in Step 2. Alternatively, you can boil or steam the frozen dumplings for about 8 minutes.