## SERVES 4 MAKES 20

## **Pork & Leek Sheng Jian Baos**



PREP: COOK: 1 HOUR\* 30 MINS

\*plus proving

This is the classic Shanghai pan-fried bao with crispy bottom and fluffy top - my (and my family's) all-time favourite when growing up in the city. I prefer this juicy pork and fragrant leek filling over most others and like to serve the buns with a generous amount of Chinese black vinegar and chilli (chile) oil drizzled over. The dough is half-yeasted, meaning the buns puff up a little when cooked. They are different to the bao buns you may be familiar with, which are fully yeasted and very fluffy with a springy texture when steamed.

- 2-3 tbsp cooking oil of choice, for frying
- 1 large handful of finely chopped spring onions (green onions)
- 2 tsp black sesame seeds
- The Ultimate Dumpling Sauce (see p.26), to serve

## FOR THE DOUGH

- 250g (scant 2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1 tsp instant dried yeast
- 1 tsp granulated sugar

## FOR THE PORK FILLING

- 250g (9oz) minced (ground) pork
- 75g (2½oz) leek, finely chopped
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp light soy sauce
- ½ tsp ground white pepper
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- ½ tsp salt

MAKING THE DOUGH Combine the flour with the yeast and sugar in a large mixing bowl. Gradually pour in the water, mixing with a wooden spoon to make a ragged dough. Knead on a lightly floured surface for a minute until it comes together into a rough ball. Return the dough to the bowl and cover with a damp tea (dish) towel or cling film (plastic wrap). Leave the dough to rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1-2 hours depending on the room temperature.

MAKING THE FILLING Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, mix all the ingredients for the filling, stirring continuously with a fork in one direction for 4 minutes, until combined. Stirring in one direction helps the protein strands to bind together more quickly. If you want to taste test at this point, fry a spoonful of the mixture until cooked through and adjust the seasoning, if needed.

- 150ml (% cup) lukewarm water SHAPING THE WRAPPERS Once the dough has risen, punch out the air and knead several times on a lightly floured work surface until a smoothish ball of dough. Pierce a hole all the way through the centre of the dough with your thumb and begin to stretch out the hole until it forms a large ring doughnut shape. Make a cut in the "doughnut" with a knife to open it out into a log. Roll the log out until the same circumference as your forefinger at its fattest point, then divide it into 20 pieces. Cover the dough pieces with a damp tea towel or cling film to prevent them drying out.

> Take one piece of dough and roll it into a ball. Place on a lightly floured chopping board or work surface and press it flat, then roll out to the size of your palm. For best results, roll the edges out slightly thinner than the middle, as this will make the dumplings easier to pleat. Repeat with the rest of the dough portions.

FILLING AND PLEATING Place the rolled-out wrapper in the middle of the palm of your non-dominant hand, spoon 1 tablespoon of the filling into the middle. If a beginner, leave a 2.5cm (1in) border around the edge of the dough to allow for pleating. (More experienced dumpling makers can leave a narrower border!)

To pleat the baos, support the wrapper with filling in your non-dominant hand, and use your dominant hand to pleat the dough. Working in a circular motion, pleat your way around the bao, sealing the edges together as you go (see p.192). Don't worry if the first few baos don't look good – practice makes perfect! As long as they are sealed with no holes, they're good to go.

Repeat until all the wrappers are filled and pleated. Cover the filled and shaped baos as you work through the rest to prevent them drying out – they may rise a little since the dough is yeasted.

**COOKING** Heat 1 tablespoon of the cooking oil in a large frying pan (with a lid) on a medium heat. Before the oil is too hot, arrange the baos slightly spaced out in the pan and cook in batches for 7 minutes, or until the bottoms are golden brown and crisp. Pour enough water into the pan, so it's 1cm (½in) deep. Cover with the lid and let the baos steam for 4-5 minutes, until the liquid is absorbed and the filling cooked through. Remove from the pan, then cook the second batch, adding another 1 tablespoon of oil. Cook a third batch of the baos in the same way, if needed.

Once all the baos are cooked, place them on a serving plate and scatter the spring onions and sesame seeds over. Enjoy with the dumpling sauce on the side.

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