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Steamed Chinese Dumplings (Shu Mai)

MAKES ABOUT 40 DUMPLINGS, 6 TO 8 APPETIZER SERVINGS

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Do not trim the excess fat from the ribs; it contributes flavor and moistness. Use any size shrimp except popcorn shrimp; there's no need to halve shrimp smaller than 26 to 30 per pound. You can substitute square or round wonton skins for the egg roll wrappers. (There's no need to trim them.) The dumplings may be frozen for up to 3 months; cook them straight from the freezer for an extra 5 minutes. Serve shu mai with store-bought chili oil or make our recipe.

2 tablespoons soy sauce

½ teaspoon unflavored powdered gelatin

1 pound boneless country-style pork ribs, cut into 1-inch pieces

½ pound shrimp, peeled, tails removed and halved lengthwise (see note)

¼ cup water chestnuts, chopped

4 dried shiitake mushroom caps (about ¾ ounce), soaked in hot water 30 minutes, squeezed dry, and cut into ¼-inch dice

2 tablespoons cornstarch

2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro leaves

1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil

1 tablespoon Chinese rice cooking wine (Shaoxing) or dry sherry

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

2 teaspoons grated ginger

½ teaspoon table salt

½ teaspoon ground black pepper

1 (1 pound) package 5 ½ inch square egg roll wrappers (see note)

¼ cup carrot, finely grated (optional)

1. Combine soy sauce and gelatin in small bowl. Set aside to allow gelatin to bloom, about 5 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, place half of pork in food processor and pulse until coarsely ground into approximate ½-inch pieces, about ten 1-second pulses; transfer to large bowl. Add shrimp and remaining pork to food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped into approximate ¼-inch pieces, about five 1-second pulses. Transfer to bowl with more finely ground pork. Stir in soy sauce mixture, water chestnuts, mushrooms, cornstarch, cilantro, sesame oil, wine, vinegar, sugar, ginger, salt, and pepper.

3. Divide egg roll wrappers into 3 stacks (6 to 7 per stack). Using 3-inch biscuit cutter, cut two 3-inch rounds from each stack of egg roll wrappers (you should have 40 to 42 rounds). Cover rounds with moist paper towels to prevent drying.

4. Working with 6 rounds at a time, brush edges of each round lightly with water. Place tablespoon of filling into center of each round. Form dumplings by pinching opposing sides of wrapper with your fingers until you have 8 equidistant pinches. Gather up sides of dumpling and squeeze gently to create "waist"; use butter knife to firmly pack filling. Transfer to parchment-lined baking sheet, cover with damp kitchen towel, and repeat with remaining wrappers and filling. Top center of each dumpling with pinch of grated carrot, if using.

5. Poke about 20 small holes in parchment round slightly smaller than diameter of steamer basket. Place in basket and lightly coat with vegetable oil spray. Place batches of dumplings on parchment liner, making sure they are not touching. Set steamer over simmering water and cook, covered, until no longer pink, 8 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately with chili oil.

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