

Vegetable Gyoza

For the vegetables:

- ¾ cup sliced shiitake mushrooms
- ¾ cup diced baby portabella mushrooms
- 1 head pac choi, shredded
- ¼ onion, sliced
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- ½ cup shredded daikon radish
- ¾ cup small diced firm tofu
- ½ cup shelled edamame/soy beans

For the seasoning:

- 1 tbsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp hot sesame oil (or chili oil)
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 2 tsp sesame seeds
- 1 tsp ground white pepper
- 2 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp Worcestershire
- ½ tsp salt

Gyoza wrappers

Dumpling sauce



Ah, dumplings. Is there a tastier meal? There are so many kinds! Turkey momos, pork gyoza, shrimp shumai, baozi, wontons, gnudi, pierogi, knogel, kreplach, mandu, har gow, I love them all! But my favorite is gyoza. I always order them when I get takeout. In fact, I liked them so much that, a few years ago, I learned how to make them myself.

Admittedly, this is a more intense recipe. It takes a fair amount of time. This is what I like to call a “Cooking Project”. It can potentially take the better part of an afternoon, but if you make a big batch (which this does) then you can have frozen dumplings in the freezer for the next few months. And it’s a wonderful group activity, or a date night! Personally, I find making dumplings to be meditative, so it isn’t unusual for me to make them when I’m a bit stressed and need to relax.

The filling can be variable. Pork and cabbage is highly traditional. But generally, gyoza can be filled with anything and everything. And, I must be honest, while I’m a definite omnivore, I can’t resist a good veggie dumpling. Generally, I attempt to remain modest, but these are the best vegetable dumplings I’ve ever had. This filling is not at all traditional but is delicious.

You can probably find dumpling wrappers in your local grocery store. But, if you can't, there will be about a dozen different kinds available in the freezer section of your local Asian grocery store. I like the ones labeled "Hong-Kong Style". They're slightly yellow and they're thinner than their "Shanghai Style" counterparts. You do want to make sure that you're getting "Gyoza" or "Dumpling" wrappers. In a pinch, you could buy "Wonton" wrappers. I would stay away from "Egg Roll" wrappers. They are very thick and not at all flexible for folding. You can make your own wrappers, but frankly, I never bother. I love going to Super Oriental (the Chinese/Japanese/Korean/Pan-Asian grocery store closest to me), so I'll take any excuse I can to go there. You'll need 50 or so wrappers. Get more than you think they need.

By the way, if you can't find fresh shiitake mushrooms, you can absolutely use the dried kind. Just reconstitute in warm-ish water for about half an hour. Don't throw the water away! You can steam the dumplings in it later.

Sauté the vegetables in a little oil over medium-high heat until wilted and slightly colored. You will probably have to do this in batches. Fry the tofu bits on one side until they are a little crispy and a little browned. Don't move the bits around once they're in the oil. Just let them be and let them do their thing.

Put all the cooked veggies in a bowl and while still warm, add in all the seasonings and mix very well. If you're trying to keep these dumplings vegan, switch the Worcestershire for Chinese Black Vinegar. You'll be able to find it in the vinegar and oil aisle of your Asian grocery. Taste the filling and adjust if you'd like. You might want more sesame or spice or maybe some green onion. Let the filling cool completely.

Now, here's the tricky part. Folding these things can take a little practice, and it's going to take some time. So, put a podcast on, get yourself a beverage, and watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAcMQWqVln0>. Please, ignore the terrible music. But it is a good instructional on how to fold these little guys.

A word of warning. This filling can be hard to work with. When folding a meat filling, the meat sticks together and provides resistance. But the vegetables want to flop everywhere. Don't be surprised if a few of the dumplings just decide to fall apart like a crunchy taco in the car. If that happens, rip the wrapper open, take the filling out, and try again with a new wrapper. When in doubt, it's perfectly acceptable to just fold the wrapper in half (like an Italian mezzaluna). Try to get as much air out of the dumpling as possible, but it's inevitable that some stays in.

Once all your dumplings are folded (a process that can take an hour or so), decide how many you want to eat now, and put the rest of them on a tray and freeze. Once they're individually frozen, they can all go in a bag together and stay in the freezer for months. Future you will thank the past you for leaving dumplings in the freezer. They are the perfect snack/impromptu dinner/appetizer/midnight feast.

To make potsticker style dumplings: Heat a bit of peanut or canola oil in a non-stick pan over medium-high heat. Add your dumplings, flat side down. Make sure there is enough space so that they aren't touching. Let the bottoms brown and fry for a few minutes. Then, add about half a cup of water to the pan (be careful, it will want to splatter and hiss at you), and cover. Reduce the heat to medium, and simmer until the wrappers are translucent and the filling is hot, about 7 minutes. You can add more water if the level gets too low before the dumplings are cooked. Then, take the cover off and let the water evaporate. Once the water is gone, let the dumplings fry in the residual oil. Give them a few minutes to get crispy again, then serve with dumpling sauce (you can make your own, but since you have to go to a specialty store to get the wrappers, might as well buy a bottle of gyoza dipping sauce).

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To steam dumplings: Boil about two inches of water in a pan big enough to fit your steamer. Put each dumpling on a small piece of parchment paper or a cabbage leaf and arrange on your steamer. Steam the dumplings until the wrapper is translucent and the filling hot, about 10 minutes. Serve with dumpling sauce.

To boil dumplings: boil the dumplings in several cups of water until the wrapper is translucent and the filling hot, about 5 minutes.

To make soup: Boil a few cups of broth, such as dashi, chicken, or veggie, and add any other vegetables you might want. Let the vegetables get a few minutes head start on cooking, and then add in your dumplings. Let the boil until the wrapper is translucent and the filling hot, about 5 minutes.

By the way, you can cook dumplings from frozen. The cooking will take a few minutes longer, but you won't notice any difference in the final dish.

I really do hope you try this! It can be such a pleasure and a joy. No matter which way you end up cooking them in the end, they will be absolutely delicious, and you will fall in love.