

Chinese Dumplings

Time Needed

- 1 hour (60 minutes)

Skill/Grade Level

- The intention of this lesson is to be utilized for any grade level with modifications based on the needs of the audience.

Core Area

- Leadership & Citizenship
- Family & Consumer Sciences

Life Skills

- Giving
Responsible Citizens
- Working
Marketable Skills
- Being
Self-Responsibility
- Relating
Accepting Differences
Social Skills
- Caring
Sharing
Empathy
Concern for Others

Educational Standards

- National 4-H Mission Mandates

Core Curriculum

- Kentucky 4-H Leadership & International Programs

Objectives

Through the Kentucky 4-H International Program participants will:

- **Experience** different cultures through geography, history, symbols, language, government, economy, agriculture, customs, religion, arts, food, and fun facts.
- **Share** about their culture while exploring different cultures.
- **Process** connections between different cultures.
- **Generalize** interdependencies of different cultures.
- **Apply** knowledge to work cooperatively with others from different cultures.

Introduction to Content

According to the U.S. Department of Education International Strategy Report (2012-2016), in order for youth to succeed in the 21st century workplace, they must develop knowledge and understanding of other countries, cultures, languages and perspectives. The overall mission of 4-H is to provide opportunities for youth and adults to work together to create sustainable community change. This is accomplished within the use of three primary content areas, or mission mandates, - citizenship, healthy living, and science. The 4-H Citizenship Mandate places emphasis on young people being engaged and active members of their community, country, and world. Citizenship is the foundation needed to help youth gain a broader understanding of life.

Curriculum

4-Hers will increase their global competencies by:

- Identifying their role in the global society,
- Investigating the interdependences of cultures,
- Appreciating the accomplishments of other cultures,
- Cooperatively work with others from varying cultures.

Learn more at www.kentucky4h.org or contact your county extension office.



Chinese Dumplings



Materials Needed

1. Prepared dumpling “wrappers”:
 - Look for “gyoza/potsticker wrappers” at your local grocery store or at an Asian market.
 - If you can’t find potsticker wrappers, you can use wonton wrappers, but they will be thicker and will take longer to cook.
 - Keep the wrappers in the refrigerator until you are ready to fill your dumplings. If the wrappers get too warm, they will stick together.
2. Dumpling filling:
 - This recipe is adapted from J. Kenji Lopez-Alt’s recipe found [here](#).
 - Makes about 40 – 50 dumplings
 - Dumpling filling Ingredients
 - 1 pound ground pork
 - ½ a medium head of napa cabbage minced, and drained of water
 - 3 scallions minced
 - 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
 - 1 tablespoon minced garlic (or less if you prefer)
 - 3 teaspoons of salt (divided)
 - 1 teaspoon ground pepper (white pepper if you have it, but black pepper is fine)
 - 2 teaspoons of sugar
3. Large knife for chopping ingredients
4. Normal spoon
5. Slotted spoon to remove dumplings after cooking
6. Large plate or platter to serve dumplings, or separate bowls for each person
7. Small bowl of water
8. Cookie sheet or large tray
9. Flour for dusting or parchment paper to cover the tray
10. Large pot of water for boiled dumplings OR a large nonstick pan with a lid, and vegetable or canola oil for pan fried dumplings

Introduction

1. What food(s) does your family always have at that special holiday meals?
2. Does your family have any traditions or special stories around that food?
3. How does tradition/culture get handed down to the next generation?

Chinese Dumplings



Background Information

What comes to mind when you hear the word “dumpling?” Southern chicken and dumplings? Italian ravioli? Polish pierogis? Dumplings are a type of food that is prepared and enjoyed all over the world. Dumplings can be a stuffing wrapped in a thin dough or pieces of dough cooked in boiling water. Dumplings can be boiled, fried, steamed and prepared in many different ways. Just like bread, dumplings probably arose independently in several cuisines. And in all likelihood, they were invented as a way to stretch a small amount of meat to feed more people. A pound of pork or beef alone might not be enough for a family of four but mix it with some chopped cabbage and onions then wrap it in dough and it’s a perfectly sufficient meal.

Chinese cooks have prepared a version of dumplings known as jiaozi ([Jiǎozi](#)) for more than 1,800 years. According to legend, Chinese stuffed dumplings were invented during the Han Dynasty by a famous physician of Traditional Chinese Medicine named Zhang Zhongjing*. Mr. Zhang was returning to his hometown after a long period of absence. During that winter there was an epidemic. Many people succumbed to the cold weather because of the lack of warm clothes and sufficient food and suffered frostbite, mainly around their ears. Seeing their condition, Mr. Zhang was determined to do something to get them rid of the frostbite.

As a way to solve this problem, he cooked up a batch of mutton, chili and healing herbs and wrapped them in scraps of dough. He folded the dumplings to look like little ears, boiled them and handed them out to his afflicted neighbors. While the dumplings likely didn’t cure their frostbite, the villagers loved the taste of Zhang’s creation so much that they kept making the dumplings long after spring began. Since that time, when Chinese people celebrate the Lunar New Year, families will prepare and eat Chinese dumplings to celebrate and wish for health and prosperity in the new year.

*Chinese names are written with the last name before the first name. In Chinese the “zh” is pronounced with an English “j” sound. You can find out more about Chinese pronunciation here:

https://resources.allsetlearning.com/chinese/pronunciation/Main_Page

Instructions

An instructional video can be found here: <https://youtu.be/rTaMntfQl4Y>

Prepare the dumpling filling ingredients:

1. To prepare the cabbage, cut the head of cabbage in half and remove the core. Separate the leaves, discarding any wilted outside leaves, then rinse the remaining leaves under running water.
2. Mince the cabbage. (If you have a food processor, you can use it to speed up this process).
3. Put the cabbage in a bowl, mix with 2 teaspoons of salt and set aside for about 15 minutes.
4. After 15 minutes put the minced cabbage in the center of a large kitchen towel and wring out as much moisture as you can. Discard the liquid.
5. In a large bowl, combine the ground pork, drained cabbage, 1 teaspoon of salt, pepper, garlic, ginger, scallions, and sugar. Mix the ingredients together until it is completely combined and starting to feel sticky. You can use a spoon, but hand mixing is the preferred method. To test for taste, put a teaspoon sized amount of filling on a microwave safe plate and microwave on high until cooked through (about 10 seconds). You can taste the filling and add more salt, pepper, and/or sugar if you want.
6. Set up a dumpling assembly line with a small bowl of water, a clean towel to wipe your fingers, the wrappers, dumpling filling, a spoon and a tray (dust tray with flour or cover with a sheet of parchment paper.)

Chinese Dumplings



Instructions (continued)

7. To form the dumplings, hold a wrapper in the palm or flat fingers of one hand and place a tablespoon sized scoop of filling in the center of the wrapper. Use the tip of the index finger dipped in water to lightly moisten the edge of the wrapper. Dry finger on towel.
8. Fold one edge of the wrapper to meet the other and form a half moon shape. Press the edges together sealing them together by pressing the edges between your fingers. Don't press so hard that you squeeze the filling out. You can always add a little less filling to your dumplings when you first get started.
9. Lay the dumplings on the plate or tray. If they begin to dry out, you can cover them lightly with a towel or plastic wrap before cooking them.

Cook the dumplings:

10. To cook the dumplings you can boil, steam or pan fry them. This [link](#) has tips for each type.
 - The easiest method is boiling.
 - To boil, heat a large pot of water over high heat, once it boils add half the dumplings and stir to prevent dumplings from sticking to the bottom of the pot. Boil for 6 to 8 minutes until cooked through. You can cut open a dumpling to check that the filling is cooked, the internal temperature of the filling should be at least 145° F. Repeat for the remaining dumplings.
11. You can eat the dumplings plain, dip them in soy sauce or buy some dumpling dipping sauce at the store.
12. Uncooked dumplings can be wrapped and frozen. Dumplings can be cooked from frozen, you just need to add a few minutes to cooking time. Any cooked dumplings may stick together when stored in the fridge, so make sure that you put a layer of plastic wrap between layers or store in one layer in a sealed storage container.

Reflect and Apply

Cooking Chinese style dumplings can help you appreciate the different ways that people prepare and enjoy food. Dumplings are often eaten in China during festivals and holidays. The biggest festival in China is the Spring Festival or Lunar New Year. Families reunite for a big meal which often includes dumplings. Since the shape of dumplings can resemble the shape of gold or silver ingots used for currency in ancient China, (yunbao) dumplings are a symbol of prosperity and wealth. During the Spring Festival, families will eat many kinds of food to wish one another a healthy, prosperous year.

By preparing and enjoying new foods you will come to understand and appreciate more about what is important to another culture. For Chinese people making dumplings is often a family affair. Because it can be time consuming to make so many dumplings, family members will gather around to stuff and shape the dumplings. Sometimes for fun a coin or piece of string will be hidden in a dumpling. The “lucky” one to find this special filling will have extra good luck in the coming year.

Chinese Dumplings



Reflect and Apply (continued)

- 1) Does your family have similar traditions related to food?
- 2) What are festivals you celebrate and what types of foods do you eat?
- 3) What do traditional celebrations mean to you and your family?
- 4) If someone from another culture come to visit, what tradition would you share with them about your family?

Expand Your Experience

Chinese Food Culture: <https://www.chinadiscovery.com/chinese-food/food-culture.html>

Spring Festival traditions and history:

<https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/chinese-new-year-history.htm>

You can find out more about the seven lucky foods here:

<https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-food/chinese-new-year-food.htm>.

References

1. The Legend of the dumpling: <https://www.history.com/news/delightful-delicious-dumplings>
2. Chinese pronunciation guide: https://resources.allsetlearning.com/chinese/pronunciation/Main_Page
3. J. Kenji Lopez Alt's dumpling recipe: <https://www.history.com/news/delightful-delicious-dumplings>
4. Dumpling cooking methods: <https://thewoksoflife.com/how-to-cook-dumplings/>
5. Learn more about Kentucky's Gateway to China: <https://international.uky.edu/oci>
6. Watch UK OCI A Bite of China cooking videos: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6vgNcUOfgKgZ9aJq61TQA_rfEpeuTFZ0
7. Follow @ukychinainitiatives on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok for more Chinese culture and Chinese language content.

Authors

Carrie Wheeler, K-12 Program Coordinator, University of Kentucky, Office of China Initiatives, International Center

Reviewers

Rachel Noble, Kentucky 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Courtney Brock, Kentucky 4-H County Extension Agent, Lincoln County
Shelley Meyer, Kentucky 4-H County Extension Agent, Pendleton County
Alex Popham, Kentucky 4-H County Extension Agent, Breckinridge County
Paul Adkins, Kentucky 4-H County Extension Agent, Bullitt County
Kelsey Chadwick, Kentucky 4-H County Extension Agent, Graves County

Extended Learning

- Research the significance of food in culture. Find other cultures that make similar dishes!

Civic Engagement

- Research more about relationships between the United States and the government of China.
- Learn about government of China. Find it on a map!

Communications

- Organize a pen pal program with the help of the 4-H International Program.
- Give a demonstration on how to make dumplings in the 4-H Communications Program.

Future Readiness

- Join the Kentucky 4-H International Program and learn more about how food is a part of culture.

Volunteering

- Ask your family to host an international delegate through Kentucky 4-H.

Junior Mentor/Teen

- Plan and conduct a workshop where you show others how to make dumplings!