CHINESE DUMPLINGS  
(POT STICKERS)  
Makes 50 to 60 dumplings  
By Dennis W. Viau; adapted from a friend's recipe

According to my Chinese friends, these dumplings are the traditional food of Chinese New Year because each dumpling is supposed to be a little packet of good luck. The more you eat, the more luck you’ll have in the coming year. So, when I eat these at their house, the only food on the table is these dumplings. I guess the idea is not to waste any room on food that is not lucky.

As for my friend’s wife, who is the best Chinese cook I know, she does not part with any secrets of her recipes. I had to figure this one out on my own. But I got close, very close.

**Dough:**
2¼ cups (11 oz./310g) flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
¾ cup (175ml) water

**Filling:**
12 ounces (340g) ground chicken or pork  
1 teaspoon rice wine or dry sherry  
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger root  
2 medium-size cloves garlic, minced  
½ cup (30g) finely chopped green onions  
1 tablespoon soy sauce  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 tablespoon peanut oil or vegetable oil  
1 tablespoon sesame oil

**Dipping sauce (per person):**
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
2 tablespoons water  
½ teaspoon sesame oil

**Directions:**
To prepare the dough, place the flour and salt in a large bowl. Stir in the water with a spoon. When dry enough to handle, knead until smooth. Wrap in plastic wrap and let rest at least 15 minutes.

Combine all the filling ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Working with ¼ of the dough at a time, feed the dough through a pasta machine (or roll by hand) to make sheets that are slightly thicker than an egg roll wrapper. Using a 2½-inch (6.4cm) round cutter, cut circles. (Dough remnants can be added to the next batch of dough to be rolled.) Put about half a teaspoon of filling in the center of a dough circle and fold in half. Seal the edges, removing as much air as possible. (Dampen the dough along the edges with a little water to help seal.) Continue with each ¼ piece of the dough until all the dumplings are assembled.

Add water to a depth of about 1½ inches (4cm) in a large skillet or wok and bring to a rapid boil. Stir the boiling water and add the dumplings, a few at a time. Depending on the pan size, limit the number to about 8 or 12 to prevent crowding. Stirring will help prevent sticking. Gently keep the water moving until the dumplings rise from the bottom. Cook 3 to 4 minutes.
Remove cooked dumplings with a strainer or slotted spoon and place in a shallow bowl. Serve immediately with the dipping sauce in small bowls. It is traditional for guests eat hot dumplings while more are cooking.

Can be frozen, uncooked, individually and placed in a sealed plastic bag for freezer storage.

**STEP-BY-STEP**

1. I use 3 to 4 skinless, boneless chicken thighs, about 12 ounces of dark meat. In another of these photo recipes I show how to fillet a chicken, should you want to fillet whole chickens.

2. I have a meat grinder somewhere, but it's easier to pull out the food processor. Drop the thighs in and pulse it for a few seconds until finely ground.
...And here is the ground chicken meat, ready for the stuffing mix.

Mix together the flour, salt, and water until dry enough to knead. Knead for a few minutes until smooth. Wrap in plastic and set aside to rest. The texture of the dough will improve with about 15 minutes resting.
I chop up 3 to 4 green onions, depending on size, to get about ½ cup. Think *finely chopped* because I want the finished dumplings to look like dumplings, not *lumplings*.

Here are all the assembled ingredients. I like to prepare my ingredients this way. It helps me not to forget anything. You can see how smooth that dough looks.
Here is where I cheat. Working with ¼ of the dough at a time, I run it through a pasta machine. My Chinese friends roll little pieces of dough into a ball, flatten them, and then use a short wooden dowel to roll each round casing by hand. I roll a sheet of dough and then use a 2½-inch round cutter to cut the casings. (The scraps outside the casings get mixed in with the next quarter of dough.)
I pass the dough through the machine, folding it and rolling it. When the dough is the width I need I use the thickness dial to adjust the rollers closer together with each pass, rolling the dough thinner and thinner. On my machine I roll to the #5 setting for the dumpling wrappers. (#1 is the thickest setting.)

Here is a sheet of dough, cut into two pieces because it was too long to fit on my cutting board. The cutter I use measures 2½ inches (6.4cm) in diameter. At one time I had an old can, the top and bottom removed, that I saved as a dumpling cutter. I used it for years, until I bought a set of round cutters.
Now that the wrappers are cut, put about half a teaspoon of stuffing in the center of a wrapper. Fold the wrapper in half and start pinching the edges together (you might need to dip a finger in a little water and wet the edges to get them to stick). Pinch all the way to the fold on both ends, making sure the dumpling is sealed all the way around. The amount of stuffing should be just enough to fill the dumpling without squeezing out when you seal the edges, and also not leave any large air pockets.

The finished dumpling should look like this. Some dumplings are made with pleated edges, but this is how I learned to make them from a Chinese cook.
Go ahead, count them. I made 58 dumplings from that bowl of stuffing and the dough, and there was a small amount of dough left over. This takes time, but if you have help from family and/or friends the task will be relatively easy. I place the dumplings on paper towels because I find they tend not to stick. Sometimes I even dust the towels with a little flour.

They’re not called pot stickers for nothing. They’ll stick to the bottom of the pan. Here’s the trick: With a large spoon start swirling the boiling water before you drop in the pot stickers, a few at a time, without crowding the pan. Gently keep the water moving. The moving dumplings will not be able to stick to the pan or to each other. After about a minute they’ll rise to the surface and you won’t need to stir the water any longer. Cook in boiling water for 3 minutes. In a large skillet I can cook about a dozen dumplings.
My Chinese friends like to make a dipping sauce with rice vinegar. I’m not crazy about vinegar, so I make my dipping sauce with half water, half soy sauce, and I add about \( \frac{1}{4} \) teaspoon of sesame oil.

There is nothing left to do but enjoy eating them.
If you don't have a pasta machine or you don't want to make your own dumplings wrappers, egg roll wrappers are a usable substitute. Cut each sheet into quarters and either use the entire small square or use a round cutter to cut a round casing.

The lower row of dumplings are made with the store-bought egg roll wrappers. The upper row is made with my own homemade dough. You can see the lower dumpling casings are a little translucent.
Conclusion

I love these things. I make these only a few times each year, even though I get plenty of requests for my pot stickers. I keep an eye on the calendar for Chinese New Year, as that is a good day to make these. And I get my friends involved. We'll sit at the kitchen table wrapping dumplings, and then eat 25 to 30 pot stickers each.

You can really see the difference when they are cooked. The lower dumplings really show their stuffing. The flavor, however, is almost identical. So feel free to use egg roll wrappers if they are more convenient.