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dim sum cookbook authentic dim sum recipes a style of cantonese cuisine

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Welcome to the Ultimate Dim Sum Cookbook: Authentic Dim Sum Recipes for the Modern Home Cook

Dim sum, the iconic Cantonese tradition of bite size delicacies served in bamboo steamer baskets or on small plates, has captivated food lovers around the world for centuries. Whether you're a seasoned chef or a curious beginner, this comprehensive guide will help you master the art of dim sum with authentic recipes, insider tips, and a deep dive into the rich history of this beloved style of Cantonese cuisine. By the end of this article, you'll have everything you need to create a memorable dim sum feast that rivals even the most celebrated tea houses.

What Is Dim Sum?

Dim sum literally means "touch the heart" in Cantonese, but in culinary terms it refers to a variety of small, flavorful dishes traditionally served with tea. The concept evolved from the ancient Chinese practice of "yum cha" (drinking tea), where diners would sip fragrant tea and nibble on an assortment of steamed buns, dumplings, rolls, and sweet pastries. Dim sum is more than just food; it's a social ritual that encourages conversation, family bonding, and the sharing of culinary creativity.

History of Dim Sum: From Imperial Banquets to Modern Street Food

Dim sum's roots trace back to the Tang Dynasty (618 907 CE) when emperors would host lavish banquets featuring a range of small, savory dishes. Over time, the practice spread throughout Guangdong province and became a staple of Cantonese culture. The modern dim sum experience began in the 19th century, when Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong and Macau started serving dim sum in tea houses to attract customers during the tea-drinking hours. Today, dim sum has transcended borders, inspiring fusion cuisines and global culinary trends.

Core Ingredients: Building Blocks for Authentic Dim Sum

While dim sum recipes can vary widely, certain ingredients are essential to achieving the classic Cantonese flavor profile. Below is a quick reference guide to the staples you'll need in your pantry:

- Rice flour, wheat starch, and tapioca starch for dough and wrappers.
- Fresh seafood—shrimp, scallops, fish fillets, and crab.
- Lean pork, chicken, and beef for savory fillings.
- Vegetables such as bamboo shoots, carrots, mushrooms, and leafy greens.
- Seasonings: soy sauce, oyster sauce, sesame oil, Shaoxing wine, sugar, and white pepper.
- Fresh herbs: cilantro, scallions, and mint.
- Sweeteners: honey, brown sugar, and maltose for desserts.

Essential Tools & Equipment for Dim Sum Mastery

While dim sum can be made with simple kitchen tools, having the right equipment will streamline the process and

enhance the final product.

1. Bamboo steamers – The traditional way to steam dim sum, ensuring a moist and tender texture.
2. Steamer baskets – Stainless steel or bamboo baskets that fit inside the steamer.
3. Rolling pin and pastry cutter – For rolling out dough and shaping wrappers.
4. Sharp knife & cutting board – Precision cutting is key for uniform size.
5. Wok or large pot – For boiling dumplings or frying crispy items.
6. Measuring spoons and cups – Accurate seasoning balances flavor.
7. Mixing bowls – Separate bowls for dough, fillings, and sauces.

Classic Dim Sum Recipes

Below you'll find a curated selection of authentic dim sum recipes that represent the breadth of Cantonese cuisine. Each dish is broken down into clear, step by step instructions to help you achieve restaurant quality results at home.

Steamed Dumplings (Har Gow & Siu Mai)

Har Gow (Shrimp Dumplings)

1. Prepare the shrimp filling: finely mince 200 /g of fresh shrimp, add 1 /tbsp soy sauce, 1 /tsp Shaoxing wine, 1 /tsp sugar, ½ /tsp sesame oil, and a pinch of white pepper. Mix until well combined.
2. Roll out thin dumpling wrappers: mix 200 /g rice flour with 80 /ml boiling water, knead until smooth, then let rest for 30 /min. Divide the dough into 12 equal portions and roll each into a thin circle.
3. Place 1 /tbsp of shrimp filling in the center of each wrapper. Fold the edges upward, pinch to seal, and gently shape into a round, flat dumpling.
4. Steam the dumplings for 8–10 /minutes, or until the wrappers turn translucent.
5. Serve with a dipping sauce of soy sauce, rice vinegar, and a dash of chili oil.

Siu Mai (Pork & Shrimp Dumplings)

1. Make the filling: combine 200 /g ground pork, 100 /g shrimp, 1 /tbsp finely chopped bamboo shoots, 1 /tbsp minced scallions, 1 /tbsp soy sauce, 1 /tsp sesame oil, and 1 /tsp sugar. Mix thoroughly.
2. Shape the wrappers: roll out 150 /g wheat flour dough into thin circles, then cut into 12 equal squares.
3. Fill each square with 1 /tbsp of pork shrimp mixture. Fold the edges upward, leaving the center exposed to form the classic siu mai shape.
4. Steam for 10–12 /minutes.
5. Optional: top each dumpling with a small slice of crab roe or a dot of black bean sauce before steaming for extra flavor.

Steamed Buns (Char Siu Bao & Milk Buns)

Char Siu Bao (BBQ Pork Buns)

1. Prepare the dough: combine 250 /g all purpose flour, 1 /tsp instant yeast, 2 /tsp sugar, 1 /tsp salt, 120 /ml warm milk, and 60 /ml water. Knead until elastic, then let rise for 1 /hour.
2. Make the filling: marinate 200 /g char siu (Cantonese BBQ pork) with 2 /tbsp soy sauce, 1 /tbsp hoisin sauce, and 1 /tsp sesame oil for 30 /min. Dice into small cubes.
3. Divide the dough into 12 portions, flatten each into a round, and place 2 /tbsp of char siu filling in the center.
4. Wrap the dough around the filling, pinch the edges, and seal. Place on a steaming rack.
5. Steam for 15–18 /minutes. The buns should be fluffy and slightly golden.

Milk Buns (Shui Bao)

1. Prepare a light, airy dough: combine 200 /g flour, 1 /tsp sugar, 1 /tsp baking powder, 100 /ml milk, 30 /ml water, and

1 /tbsp melted butter. Knead lightly and let rise for 45 /min.

2. Divide the dough into 12 portions and roll each into a round. Place 1 /tbsp of sweetened bean paste (red bean or lotus seed) in the center.
3. Wrap and seal as with char siu bao. Steam for 12–14 /minutes.
4. Serve warm, optionally drizzled with a light soy glaze.

Fried Snacks (Cheung Fun & Egg Tarts)

Cheung Fun (Rice Noodle Rolls)

1. Prepare the rice noodle batter: blend 200 /g rice flour with 400 /ml water, 1 /tsp salt, and 1 /tsp sesame oil until smooth. Let rest for 30 /min.
2. Heat a non stick pan, pour a thin layer of batter, and steam for 30 /seconds until translucent.
3. Layer the steamed noodle sheet with a thin spread of sesame sauce, a sprinkle of scallions, and a handful of cooked shrimp.
4. Roll tightly, slice into bite size pieces, and drizzle with sweet soy sauce.

Egg Tarts (Yum Cha Egg Tarts)

1. Prepare the pastry crust: mix 200 /g flour, 100 /g butter, 50 /g sugar, 1 /egg yolk, and a pinch of salt. Roll into a smooth dough and chill for 30 /min.
2. Roll the dough into 12 equal portions, press into tart tins, and blind bake at 200 /°C for 5 /minutes.
3. Whisk 3 /egg whites, 200 /ml milk, 50 /g sugar, and 1 /tsp vanilla extract until frothy. Pour into the cooled crusts.
4. Bake at 180 /°C for 15 /minutes until the custard sets and the crust is golden.

Sweet Dim Sum (Yum Cha Desserts)

Red Bean Mung Bean Pudding (Mung Bean Red Bean Soup)

1. Soak 150 /g mung beans overnight, then boil until tender. Drain and mash slightly.
2. In a saucepan, combine the mung beans, 200 /ml coconut milk, 80 /g sugar, and 1 /tsp vanilla. Simmer for 10 /minutes.
3. Strain through a fine sieve to remove any lumps. Pour into small ramekins and chill.
4. Serve topped with crushed ice and a drizzle of sweetened condensed milk.

Steamed Milk Pudding (Shui Tou)

1. Blend 200 /ml milk, 2 /tbsp sugar, and 1 /tbsp gelatin dissolved in 30 /ml hot water. Heat gently until gelatin dissolves.
2. Pour the mixture into a shallow dish, cover, and refrigerate until set.
3. Serve chilled with a light drizzle of honey or caramel sauce.

Savory Dim Sum (Cantonese Meatballs & Eggplant)

Steamed Pork Meatballs (Shui Jiao)

1. Mix 300 /g ground pork with 1 /tbsp finely minced garlic, 1 /tbsp soy sauce, 1 /tbsp Shaoxing wine, 1 /tsp sugar, and a pinch of white pepper.
2. Shape into small, round meatballs and place on a steamer tray.
3. Steam for 10–12 /minutes. Serve with a dipping sauce of soy sauce, rice vinegar, and minced chilies.

Stir Fried Eggplant with Garlic (Chao Yao)

1. Cut eggplant into bite size cubes, sprinkle with salt, and let rest for 15 /min to draw out bitterness.
2. In a wok, heat 2 /tbsp oil, add 4 cloves minced garlic, and stir fry until fragrant.
3. Add eggplant and stir until lightly browned. Add 1 /tbsp soy sauce, 1 /tsp sugar, and 2 /tbsp water.

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