

Dim Sum are those delightful sweet and savory dumplings, buns, pastries and other "Small eats" that form the foundation of the much-loved Cantonese tea lunch, known as Yum Cha.

Dim Sum, as it is called in Cantonese, or "dian xin" in Mandarin, is translated literally as "dot-the-heart." In other words, small delicacies or snacks.

In Hong Kong Tea Houses, Dim Sum can be enjoyed every day from morning to afternoon. Stainless steel push carts with towers of small bamboo steamers are paraded through the dining room. Each push cart features a different delicacy—crab claws, shrimp dumplings, steamed barbecued pork or sweet red bean buns, steamed spare rib nuggets with black beans, and on and on. The diner just points to what is wanted and the steaming hot dishes are placed on the table. All of this is enjoyed with lots of hot tea. At the end of the meal, the waiter simply counts up the total number of plates and steamers on your table and tallies up the bill. It is a wonderfully fun way of enjoying a popular Chinese food tradition.

Now you can serve Dim Sum just the way they do in authentic Cantonese Tea Houses. The covered individual steamers also make perfect serving pieces for Asian or Western foods. Let your creativity be your guide. Here are some suggestions:

- Serve restaurant bought Dim Sum in its own mini-bamboo steamer.
- Steam and serve store-bought or homemade dumplings or buns.
- Makes an unusual serving piece for hors d'oeuvres, appetizers and desserts.

TO USE

Four of our 4" Dim Sum Steamers fit into a 12" bamboo steamer. Place dumplings to be steamed on a piece of lightly oiled parchment paper or cabbage leaf placed in the bottom of each Dim Sum Steamer. Fit the uncovered Dim Sum Steamers into a 12" bamboo steamer. Place the 12" steamer over boiling water, cover and steam cook as directed.

Or, simply use the lidded Dim Sum Steamers as unique and elegant individual serving dishes.

TO CLEAN

Wash only with hot water and a stiff brush. Allow to air dry thoroughly before storing in a well-ventilated place.

STEAMED PEARL BALLS

These little meatballs are rolled in glutinous rice and when steamed, the rice turns shiny and translucent, reminiscent of pearls. They make excellent appetizers or dim sum.

Makes about 40 meatballs.

1 pound ground pork or ground turkey
4 dried black mushrooms, soaked in hot water until soft, stems removed and caps finely minced
6 whole water chestnuts, finely minced (about 1/3 cup)
2 scallions, white and green parts, finely minced
2 teaspoons peeled and grated gingerroot
1 tablespoon dry sherry
1 tablespoon light soy sauce
1 tablespoon dark sesame seed oil
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 egg white
1 cup glutinous rice*, rinsed and soaked in water for two hours or overnight

Mix all of the ingredients together, except the glutinous rice. The meat mixture may be made in advance, covered and refrigerated until ready to use. Drain the glutinous rice and put in a shallow plate.

Line the steamer tray with parchment or wax paper. Scoop up a tablespoon of meat with a spoon and with your hands form walnut-sized meatballs, about 1-inch in diameter. Roll each ball in the glutinous rice until evenly coated. Place the rice coated meat balls at least 1/2 inch apart in the steamer tray.

Prepare the steamer by bringing water to a rapid boil over high heat, then reduce heat to medium high to maintain a steady boil. Steam the meatballs for 20 minutes or until they are cooked through. Serve hot from the steamer.

*Note: Glutinous rice is also known as sweet rice. It is a sticky rice that is traditionally used in sweet desserts and in savory fillings. Regular long grain rice should not be substituted, as it will fall off the meatballs when they are steamed.

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