

Madame Huang's Kitchen 黃媽媽的食談

Posted every Monday at 9:00 am PST, or more often if I get around to it...

Monday, January 6, 2020

Tomato and candied ginger jam



Ta-da, and welcome to my very successful attempt to bring the warm days of summer straight up into the dead of winter via tomato jam.

Most folks don't think of tomatoes as being good candidates for jam, but these are after all berries—we're just used to finding them in savory dishes, is all.

You certainly can use fresh tomatoes here, but good canned tomatoes are a couple million times easier, since then you won't need to peel them. Plus, a really tasty canned tomato will be full-flavored, so most of the guesswork will be tossed out of the equation, too.

In my recent experiments with this suddenly beloved ingredient, I've come to rely on the excellent canned tomatoes of Europe (Italy, really) that have nothing added—no salt, no water, no basil, no nothing. Most of the seeds have somehow been magically eliminated, too, which makes me even happier.

I've given this brilliantly red jam a really good spectrum of flavors with candied ginger for heat, fresh lemon juice and zest for tartness, honey for sweetness, and just a dash of salt to round these all out. You can pull this together from start to finish in around half an hour, and it really is delicious.

This is excellent with cheese and crackers or in toasted cheese sandwiches or on cold chicken.



Instant summer

Tomato and candied ginger jam

Fānqié jiāngtáng guōjiàng 番茄薑糖果醬

Makes about 2½ cups | 600 ml

- 2 (400 g) cans peeled tomatoes, preferably European
- 8 ounces | 225 g (about ¾ cup) honey
- Zest and strained juice of 1 lemon
- 2 ounces | 55 g candied ginger, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt

1. Dump the tomatoes and all their juices into a tall 4 quart | 4 liter saucepan. Use your hand to squish the tomatoes into submission—they don't have to be totally mashed up, as some larger chunks add a nice bit of texture to the final jam.

2. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir this pretty much constantly over medium-high heat for about 20 to 25 minutes, until the tomatoes are reduced to a thick, glossy, syrupy, bright red goo. If you're using a thermometer, the mixture should reach about 220°F | 105°C.



"Good Graces" named one of The Atlantic's "Exceptional Works of Journalism" for 2017.

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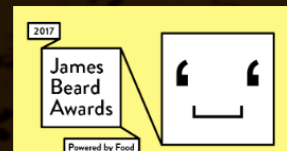
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Comments

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Send any questions to me via email. My gmail address is madamehuang. I'll try to respond, but sometimes that takes a bit of time. Thanks.

3. Remove the pan from the heat, cool it down to room temperature, transfer to a closed container, and refrigerate. This freezes well if you don't plan to use it up quickly.

Half the fun lies in smooching the tomatoes

Thanks to Greatest Tomatoes from Europe for the sample cans!

at January 06, 2020

Links to this post



Labels: Greatest Tomatoes from Europe, Tomato and candied ginger jam, 番茄薑糖果醬

Monday, December 30, 2019

Rice cakes with yellow chives and mushrooms



One of the glories of East Chinese cooking is its artistry with rice, particularly sticky rice.

In other parts of the country these grains are turned into equally sticky dishes or ingredients.

However, Zhejiang province in particular has mastered their transformation into hard white logs or small batons that are literally called year cakes, but which we know as rice cakes, which still doesn't make much sense in English, but there you go.

Be that as it may, since they are called year cakes in Chinese, they make the perfect vegan dish for the Lunar New Year (January 25 this year). Plus, these are so crazily easy to make that they should probably be on regular rotation throughout the year.

I've found that some of the most reliable brands now available in the Bay Area actually come from Korean manufacturers since they have become a beloved staple in Korean cuisine, where they're known as *tteok*.



Korean sliced rice cakes

When it comes to Chinese yellow chives, the main thing you want to be concerned with is freshness. Each leaf should look bright, shiny, and full of pep.

This vegetable goes south so fast no matter how hard you try to treat them with love and respect, so count on using them no later than the day after you buy them.

If you've done that, they are easy to prep: just rinse and cut them into the desired length.

If not, you'll have to spend precious time slowly picking over them, pulling out the slimy leaves, and that is no treat. Plus, they smell awful if they're not extremely bouncy, so choose your yellow chives carefully and use them immediately.



Super fresh yellow chives

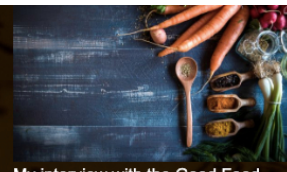
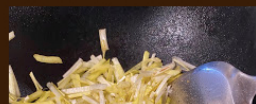
Fresh mushrooms of any kind are delicious here. I've used Chinese black mushrooms, but feel free to improvise to your heart's content. And be sure to season this with salt, not soy sauce, since you want the beauty of the chives to shine through.

Rice cakes with yellow chives and mushrooms

Jīucàihuáng xiānggū chǎo nián'gāo 韭菜黃香菇炒年糕

Zhejiang

Serves 4



My interview with the Good Food Hour on KSRO



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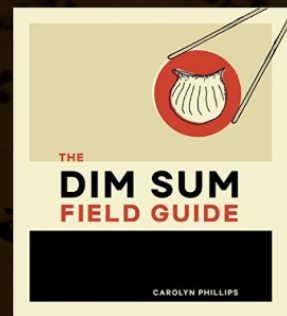
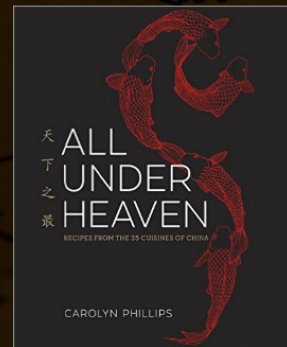


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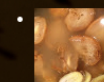
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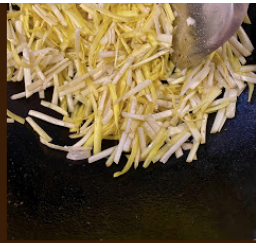
Kimberly Witherspoon
Inkwell Literary Management



Monkey head soup
I know, I know, this is really about mushrooms, not actual monkey heads.

But I got you to look, right? This is actually a recipe that...

½ cup | 125 ml peanut or vegetable oil, divided in half
 ½ teaspoon sea salt
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 8 ounces | 250 g fresh mushrooms, stemmed and sliced
 1 pound | 500 g yellow Chinese chives, trimmed and cut into 1-inch | 2-cm pieces
 8 ounces | 250 g sliced rice cakes
 ½ cup mild rice wine
 2 cups boiling water
 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
 Salt to taste



Cook these only till wilted

1. Pour half the oil in a wok set over medium-high heat and toss in the salt, garlic, and mushrooms. Stir-fry them until the mushrooms are golden on the edges, and the slide them out into a work bowl. Without adding any more oil, toss in the yellow chives and stir-fry them until they have barely wilted. Add these to the mushrooms.



Sliced fresh Chinese black mushrooms

2. Pour the rest of the oil into the wok and add the rice cakes. Toss these around until they have gently browned on the edges, and then add the rice wine and boiling water. Simmer the rice cakes, stirring often from the bottom, until the water has reduced to a thick gravy. Toss in the mushrooms, chives, and sesame oil, and then add more salt as needed to taste. Serve hot as an entrée or side.

at December 30, 2019

Links to this post



Labels: Lunar New Year dishes, Rice cakes with yellow chives and mushrooms, vegan, vegetarian cuisine, Zhejiang cuisine, 韭菜黃香菇炒年糕

Monday, December 23, 2019

Something special for the Lunar New Year table




Mark Saturday, January 25 on your calendar, boys and girls, for that is the beginning of the Lunar New Year. This time around we will be celebrating the Year of the Rat, as well as the beginning of a whole new decade that I hope will be much less stressful than the last and full of joy for you all.


With that in mind, I'm offering up this marvelous dish from Hunan. Its finished shape calls to mind the idea of togetherness or even a silver ingot (don't get all judgey on me here... this is Chinese Culture 101), so it is an appropriately auspicious thing to serve as you usher in the New Year.

As always, hunt down an excellent butcher to hook you up with this fresh pork hock (or shank). Its flavor is paramount to the success of the dish, and supermarket pork just won't do. If you don't have Shaoxing rice wine, sherry or even a dry white wine will work here, since it's not a dominant flavor.


Only a little bit of bean sauce is called for here (and, please notice, no soy sauce or salt), and that will probably end up being enough for your taste, as it imparts just a gentle salinity to the sauce and pork. Be sure and use a bean sauce that doesn't have chilies in it, for this is a classic Hunan dish that offers up only muted suggestions of heat through the diced fresh chile that, of course, can way up be high on the Scoville scale if that is what spins your wheels.

Make this over a leisurely three days to give the pork time to slowly braise and absorb the flavors while shuffling off the fat under its skin. This fatty layer will turn into a bit of buttery delight by the time you stick it in your mouth. And be sure and reserve the melted fat for something else—it's flavorful lard that will be great in things like *cōngyóubǐng* (fried scallion flatbreads), where it will make those flaky layers even flakier.

 **Homemade fermented rice**
 The first time that I heard about Chinese fermented rice, it was from a fellow American student in Taipei. She told me with singular excitement...

 **Taiwanese fried pork chops & mustard pickles**
 When I lived in Taiwan back in the late seventies and early eighties, this kind of pork chop could be found on almost every street and...

 **Fresh bamboo shoots for hot weather**
 Taiwan spent fifty years under Japanese occupation, from 1895 to 1945, and the culinary influence has never left. The fresh seafood avail...

 **Chinese candied kumquats**
 One of the highlights of Chinese New Year has always been the possibility that I will finally have my fill of Chinese candied kumquats. M...

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黃媽媽 = 黃凱玲



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Hunan braised pork hock

Húnán zǒuyóu típǎng 湖南走油蹄膀

Hunan

Serves 6 to 8

Pork and first braise:

1 pork hock (about 3 pounds | 1.5 kg), bone in and skin on

Water, as needed

1 cup | 250 ml Shaoxing rice wine

6 garlic cloves, peeled but left whole

A handful of thinly sliced ginger

3 star anise

2 teaspoons ground toasted Sichuan peppercorns

Second braise:

1 tablespoon peanut or vegetable oil

2 tablespoons bean sauce (such as Sichuan-style *dòubànjiàng* 豆瓣醬 or Cantonese *yuánshàichí* 原曬豉 or 原晒豉)

1 tablespoon crushed rock sugar

2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

Finishing ingredients:

2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 tablespoon minced ginger

1 red chile, seeded and finely chopped

2 green onions, finely chopped

1. Start this recipe at least 2 days before you plan to serve it. Place the pork in a saucepan, preferably one with a relatively tight fit so that lots of water are not needed, as this will dilute the flavors. Add water so that the pork is more or less submerged and bring the pan to a boil. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes to blanch it, turning the pork over once or twice when you think of it. Dump out the water and rinse off both the pork and the pan. Return the hock to the pan.

2. Add the rice wine, garlic, ginger, star anise, and Sichuan peppercorns to the pork. Pour in enough boiling water to almost cover the hock. Bring the pan to a boil and then lower the heat to a bare simmer. Slowly braise the pork for 3 hours. Turn off the heat, cover, and let it sit overnight.

3. Pour the oil into a small pan and add the bean sauce. Stir this over medium heat until the sauce simmers, and then scrape this into the pan with the pork. Add the rock sugar and vinegar, bring the pan to a boil, and then lower the heat again to a bare simmer. Braise the pork for around 2 hours. Turn off the heat, cover, and let it sit overnight.

4. Remove the melted fat that has solidified on top of the liquid. Remove the pork hock and place it on a rimmed heatproof plate bowl. Steam the pork for around 2 hours. It will be perfectly done when you can easily twist the larger bone in the hock. While the pork is steaming away, strain the braising sauce into a smaller saucepan and discard the solids.

5. Remove the hock from the steamer and pour any juices into the smaller saucepan. Bring the braising sauce to a full boil and quickly reduce it until it starts to thicken—you should have about 1 cup | 250 ml of thick sauce. Add the finishing ingredients, bring the sauce to a boil, simmer about 5 minutes, and then taste and adjust the seasonings as desired. Pour the sauce over the hock and serve it whole so that your diners can enjoy it



Fresh pork hock



Blanched and ready to go



Pour on the sauce

Instagram



before you slice it into wedges. Serve this with hot steamed rice.

at December 23, 2019

Links to this post 

Labels: Hunan braised pork hock, Hunan cuisine, Lunar New Year dishes, 湖南走油蹄膀

Monday, December 9, 2019

Chinese borscht



I've recently partnered with the folks at the [Greatest Tomatoes from Europe](#) to celebrate what have to be the most amazing canned tomatoes I have ever tasted. They are so good, in fact, that over the next couple of months I'll be sharing recipes with you that put the spotlight on these tomatoes. Disclaimer: I was provided with a delicious array of these European canned tomatoes as an incentive, and I have to admit that I've been happily incentivizing ever since!

Today is an easy dish for these blustery days: the Chinese version of borscht, Mother Russia's quintessential soup.

Even the name in Chinese tells you that: *Luósòng* means (and sounds like) "Russian." But as soon as you taste it, you

know you've wandered over the border into Manchuria, as those rich, Slavic flavors have been tempered and emboldened by ginger, rice wine, soy sauce, and (yes) sometimes even catsup.

But what really launches this soup into culinary heaven are two things: really great canned tomatoes plus the oxtail that forms the backbone (sorry) of the broth.

A friend of mine recently introduced me to the canned tomatoes of Europe, and I am officially hooked. Full-flavored doesn't even begin to describe them. These taste of pure, ripe tomatoes - nothing else, not even salt.



The most flavorful meat soup yet

And while most canned tomatoes I've used have swum in a thin juice, these are nestled in almost a puree of more tomatoes. Good canned tomatoes are what give this soup the depth it needs to become the perfect bowl of Chinese borscht. If you for some reason you must use a

lesser quality canned tomato, don't despair, because you can always add catsup to the soup for a touch more oomph. But that being said, snag a can or two of these imports when you see them because they just might make you smile a bit more.

Now we get to the meat: Criminally underused in the States for no good reason that I can ascertain, oxtails are on my list of best beef cuts ever. Tendons give the cow the opportunity to whisk this appendage around with considerable expressiveness, and those tendons are exactly what give any oxtail soup worth its salt that incredible body.

If cooked well – and by that I mean that just the right amount of time and heat and moisture are applied – those tendons disappear into the soup, while the muscles become almost custardy, the marrow leaking out of the bones and making the soup that much richer.



No liquid other than pureed tomatoes

Manchurian Russian soup

Luósòng tāng 羅宋湯

Northeast

Serves 6 as a main dish

Beef and broth:

1 oxtail (3-4 lbs), cut into 4-6 inch sections, with the butchery (see [Tip 1](#))

1 oxtail (2 to 2½ pounds | 1 kg) cut into rounds by the butcher (see tips)

3 tablespoons peanut or vegetable oil

2 inches ginger, thinly sliced (about ¼ cup)

1 large onion cut into 1-inch | 2 cm chunks

6 garlic cloves, peeled and lightly smashed

2 bay leaves

6 cups | 1.5 liters water

¼ cup | 60 ml Shaoxing rice wine

¼ cup | 60 ml regular soy sauce



Glorious oxtails

Vegetables:

3 small Yukon Gold or other potatoes

3 carrots, peeled

1 (28 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, preferably

European (see headnotes)

Water, as needed

Optional: up to ½ cup | 125 ml catsup if your canned tomatoes are underwhelming

Handfuls of parsley or cilantro, chopped, for garnish

1. Ideally, start this recipe a day before you plan to serve it, although you can also prep and cook this within 90 minutes. Rinse the oxtail sections and pat them dry. Heat the bottom part of the pressure cooker on high and then add the oil.

Toss in the ginger and fry it for a few seconds to release its fragrance. Add the oxtail and let it sear on one side before turning the pieces over with some metal tongs. Let each side brown and caramelize before turning it (see Tips). When the oxtail has been completely browned, remove it and the ginger to a plate or something, but leave the oil in the pan.



Roll cut carrots

Add the onion and garlic cloves and toss them around in the hot oil until the onion is lightly browned. Return the oxtails and ginger to the pan along with the bay leaves, water, rice wine, and soy sauce. Cover the pan with the top of the pressure cooker, lock it, and place the pan over high heat to bring it to high pressure. Adjust the heat to maintain this high pressure and cook the oxtail for 55 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let the pressure drop naturally for around 10 minutes before opening the lid away from you so that you don't get scalded.

2. While the oxtail is cooking away, prepare the vegetables: Wash the potatoes and cut each one into eighths. (You leave them unpeeled, if you like. I do.) Wash and trim the carrots, and then roll cut them into pieces about 1 inch | 2 cm long. Place the potatoes and carrots in a medium saucepan. Open the can of tomatoes and drain the juices into the saucepan. Slice each tomato into pieces about ¾-inch | .75 cm thick and add them to the saucepan. Pour just enough water into the saucepan to cover the root vegetables and bring the saucepan to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook the vegetables until they are done to your taste, about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

3. When the oxtails are done, pour the pan full of vegetables into the soup, taste, and adjust the seasoning. Add the catsup to taste, if you like. In the best of all worlds, let the soup come to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate it overnight. Then, remove most of the fat before simmering the soup for around 15 minutes to heat it up again. Ladle the soup into individual soup bowls or serve it in a terrine; garnish with lots of chopped parsley or cilantro and serve with bread or rice.

Tips

If you don't have a pressure cooker, simply brown the meat and onions, etc., as directed in Step 1 and then simmer the meat until it is tender, which should take around 3 hours. The rest of the recipe needs no adjustment.

This is a cold weather soup, so tomatoes are not going to be at their best. That's why I recommend really good quality canned tomatoes



...but that's why I recommend really good quality canned tomatoes.

What else I like: no salt or water!

at December 09, 2019

Links to this post



Labels: Chinese borscht, Greatest Tomatoes from Europe, Northeast cuisine, pressure cooker, 羅宋湯做法 羅宋湯

Pumpkin bread for this season and every day



Just in time for the holidays is this gorgeous—and gorgeous tasting—bread. Pumpkin has gradually become more than a bit beloved in Chinese bakery goods over the years.

This vegetable is, of course, an all-American native, but everything about it seems to appeal to the Chinese aesthetic, especially when it's used in a food that ostensibly is as nutritionally empty as white bread, because then—voilà—your kids are eating vegetables!

Pumpkin has a gorgeous color going for it, which doesn't hurt in the least. This reddish cast is auspicious. Until modern times, Chinese didn't have a word for "orange" in Chinese (one of life's many mysteries), and so the color "gold" was traditionally assigned instead, which is even better when you're trying to describe something with more cachet. So there's that.

And melon seeds are a big deal with the Chinese. Teatime has always included a little saucer of salted, roasted watermelon seeds on the side for nibbling. It's a female art, though.

My old girlfriends in Taipei loved this snack so much that many (most?) of them had a little notch in one of their front teeth from cracking zillions of them over the years. I never quite mastered this, and often ended up with a mush of shells and kernels in my mouth that I would then try to inconspicuously get rid of, usually failing grandly in the process.



Pumpkin schmear

But anyway, I've been playing around with the idea of making a pumpkin bread that wasn't cakelike, but truly a bread. I didn't want it too sweet or buttery, but finely textured and full of flavor, with just enough pumpkin to turn the bread into, well, a lovely shade of gold.

I was thinking of a ribbon of pumpkin winding its way around in the bread, both because it would be so darned pretty, and also because it would lend a wonderful moistness to the affair and completely use up the can of pumpkin puree, which I did not want to see moldering away in the back of the fridge.



Fold over the long edges

Tastewise, I put my foot firmly down on there being no pumpkin spice. But a dash of ginger is nice, as is the coconut sugar that lends a slightly honeyed aroma without turning things too saccharine.

The crowning touch is the coating of pumpkin seeds. I mean, the loaf looks bejeweled when you get done with it! Their jade color contrasts perfectly with the loaf itself, and they brown just the right amount while the dough is cooking. Full of crunch and flavor, I've come to adore the end pieces because then I get a ridiculous amount of the toasted seeds in each mouthful. Yet another reason to be in charge of the bread knife in your house.

Again, I'm calling for a Pullman loaf pan. This will ensure that the loaf's surface is completely embedded with the seeds and the top doesn't get away with bald bits. It makes a whole lot of difference here, so try it out and see.



Pumpkin times three Pullman loaf

Nánguā nánguā nánguā tǔsī miànbāo 南瓜南瓜南瓜吐司麵包

Makes 1 (9 x 4 inch | 22 x 10 cm) loaf



A Pullman pan

Dough:

- 1 teaspoon active yeast
- 3 tablespoons | 45 ml warm water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup | 180 g canned pumpkin puree (NOT pumpkin pie filling—see Tips)
- 2 cups | 300 g Chinese flour, plus about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup | 750 g for kneading
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup | 60 g | $\frac{1}{2}$ stick unsalted butter, softened

Filling:

- 1 cup | 265 g pumpkin puree
- 2 tablespoons coconut sugar, or packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon powdered ginger



Patting on the seeds

The rest:

Spray oil

- 1 cup | 150 g untoasted, shelled pumpkin seeds

Water for sprinkling

1. Sprinkle the yeast on the warm water and sugar in a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. (Theoretically, you can make this bread by hand, but the dough ends up being so soft and sticky that it's definitely easier to have the mixer do all the work.) Let the yeast bloom for about 20 minutes, and then add the egg, pumpkin puree, flour, and salt. Mix these together and then knead on medium-low speed for about 10 minutes, until the dough is elastic and silky. Add the butter and continue to knead the dough for another 5 minutes or so to really build up the gluten. Remove the bowl from the mixer, cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and let it rise in a warm area until the dough is at least double in size, around 1 to 2 hours. Punch it down and then let it rise another time until at least double in bulk. Dump the puffy dough out on to a board covered with flour and knead it by hand until it is not very sticky. Cover it again and let the dough rest for around 20 minutes.



Ready to rise

2. To make the filling, mix the puree, sugar, salt, and ginger together in small work bowl.

3. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured board, sprinkle some flour on top, and use a rolling pin to roll it out into a long strap around 18 x 8 inches | 45 x 20 cm. Use a silicone spatula to spread the filling all over the dough up to around 1 inch | 2 cm from the edges. Fold the long edges over toward the center to completely hide the filling, and then fold the short edges over each other to give you a squarish shape about 9 x 4 inches | 22 x 10 cm, which (ta-da!) is the size of your pan.



Risen to the top

4. Spray your Pullman loaf pan and lid with oil. Pour half of the pumpkin seeds in a large, rimmed dish. Wet your hands and smear this all over the loaf before placing it in the seeds. Pour the rest of the seeds over the top of the loaf and pat as many of the seeds into the wet dough as you can, but don't stress if some of them fall off or refuse to fuse. What you do is sprinkle half of these renegade seeds into your pan before laying the seed-studded dough on top of them and then dust the top with any remaining seeds. Flick some more water over the dough and cover the pan with plastic wrap. Let the dough rise until it almost reaches

the top of the pan. (Remember that you must be able to slide the lid on top, so don't let it overproof.)

5. Set a rack just below the middle of your oven and set it for 350°F | 175°C. When the oven is ready, sprinkle some water over the dough to create steam inside the pan. Slide the lid onto the pan, set the pan in the oven, and bake for around 40 minutes. When you open the pan, the loaf should be a lovely golden brown and sound hollow when you tap it in the center. Remove the pan from the oven, turn the loaf out onto a cake rack, and let it cool before cutting it into slices. This freezes well, of course.



Fresh from the oven

Tips

Use pumpkin puree here, not pumpkin pie filling, which has sugar and spices added.

This recipe uses up one 15 ounce | 425 g can so that you don't have any leftovers. Yay.

at [December 09, 2019](#)

[Links to this post](#)



Labels: Chinese bread, Chinese pastry, Pumpkin times three Pullman loaf, Taiwanese cuisine, toast bread, 南瓜吐司麵包

Monday, December 2, 2019

What your life needs right now: Taiwanese scallion buns



I have always loved Taiwanese bakeries. Even back at the beginning of my life in Taipei, I often indulged my passion for cakes and pastries by making the rounds of my favorite baked goods shops. These buns were one of my most memorable crushes. And now you get to taste why.

If you like things like scallion pancakes (*cōngyóubǐng* 蔥油餅), where the fragrant green confetti of chopped green onions collides against a dab of oil, a sprinkle of salt, and enough starchy goodness to spread out the flavors in a perfect pattern, then you are going

to adore these little breads.

And the thing is, these are super, super easy to pull together. The fact that they are drop-dead gorgeous just makes them irresistible.

Even if this is your first attempt at making raised bread, you will be successful. The actual hands-on time is minimal, as for the lion's share of the prep you'll simply be waiting around for the yeast to wake up, the dough to rise, and the buns to bake.

If you want, you can make these in a stand mixer with a dough hook or a food processor. It doesn't really matter. But I like to just whip these up in a bowl and then quickly knead everything on a counter, since I find it's even faster and simpler that way.

I'm not sure of their history, but I'm guessing that these started out as one of Hong Kong's many variations on the Parker House roll theme that has worked its way into so many Chinatown bakeries and dim sum teahouses. Perhaps Japan had a hand in this somewhere along the way, as its influence on Taiwan's Western-style baked goods has always been pretty strong and, admittedly, delicious.



Really foamy yeast is important

But no matter what their provenance, these buns really took off as culinary stars once they took root in Taiwan. Fortunes have been made with bakeries specializing in these soft breads—both savory and sweet—and many a Chinese market on this side of the Pacific will have a beloved satellite bakery attached to it, or at least very close by.

Taiwanese baked breads tend to be much softer and lighter than what we make in the West. There are eggs and shortening in the dough to make the bread even fluffier, but the key to the perfect texture is (as with all Chinese pastas and breads) the flour. Try to find good Korean wheat flour, since it has the right amount of gluten and tends to be of excellent quality. The ones with the polar bear somewhere on the bag are my favorite brand. If that's not an option, just use my go-to recipe for Chinese flour: 2 parts all-purpose plus 1 part pastry flour.



Fully risen dough

Although the dough recipe is my own, the source for the shaping of these buns is an excellent blog called [The Woks of Life](#). The ones they showed there were so beautiful that they really caught my eye.

This blog deserves a lot of credit and is worth bookmarking, so here's a shout out and a whole lot of thanks to this adorable family of food writers and bloggers!

These freeze and reheat incredibly well, so make a big batch and stash them away for breakfasts and snacks. If you're a vegetarian, leave out the pork fluff and you'll still have amazing buns on your hands.

Green onion and pork fluff buns

Xiāngcōng ròusōng miànbāo 香蔥肉鬆麵包

Taiwan

Makes 16 (6-inch | 15 cm) batons

Dough:

- 1½ cups | 300 ml warm water
- ½ cup | 50 g powdered milk (nonfat or regular)
- 1 tablespoon bread yeast
- ¼ cup | 60 g sugar
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 4 cups | 600 g Chinese flour, plus about 1 cup | 150 g more for kneading and shaping
- 1½ teaspoons sea salt
- ¼ cup fresh peanut or vegetable oil



Mayo as glue = yum

Filling:

- 2 cups lightly packed | 150 g finely chopped green onions
- About 1¼ cups | 100 g [homemade pork fluff](#) (see [Tips](#)), optional
- 1 cup | 240 ml mayonnaise

Toppings:

- 1 large egg, lightly beaten, mixed with 1 teaspoon water
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon sugar dissolved in 1 tablespoon boiling water

1. Mix the warm water, powdered milk, yeast, and sugar together in a large work bowl. Give the yeast time to wake up and become very foamy, which should take around 20 to 30 minutes. If you don't get a good head of foam, buy fresh yeast and start over.

2. Stir the egg, flour, salt, and oil into the yeast mixture to form a soft dough. Flour a smooth work surface and dump the dough out on top. Quickly knead the dough, adding more flour as necessary to keep it from sticking, until it is smooth and bouncy. Roll the dough into a ball lightly flour it. Cover the dough with a clean tea towel, invert the bowl over the top to help keep the dough moist, and wait until the dough has



Slit the cigar down the middle

risen to at least twice its original size, which will take about an hour.

3. Cut the dough into 16 even pieces. Toss them with flour and cover with a dry tea towel to keep them from drying out. Cover 2 baking sheets with either Silpat or parchment paper. Heat a convection oven to 350°F | 175°C (regular oven 375°F | 190°C) and set 1 rack near the center. Working on one piece at a time, roll a piece into a rectangle about 2 x 4 inches | 10 x 5 cm in size. Spread 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise over the dough and sprinkle it with about 2 tablespoons green onion and an optional 1 tablespoon of pork fluff.



Ready for the oven

4. Roll the rectangle up from a long side into a cigar, gently flatten it, and then cut it down the middle, leaving one end uncut. Lightly twist these two pieces together with the cut sides out so that they look pretty. Pinch the cut end closed. Place the bun on a prepared baking sheet. You should be able to fit 8 of these buns on each sheet, but be sure to leave around 1 inch | 2 cm between them on all sides, as they will rise. Repeat this step with 7 more balls of dough in order to fill up the sheet.

5. Brush the egg wash all over each of the twists, and then sprinkle them generously with the sesame seeds. Set the pan in the center of the oven and bake for about 13 minutes, or until the buns are a lovely golden brown. Repeat Steps 4 and 5 for the remaining 8 pieces of dough while the first batch is cooking.

6. Once the buns have baked, brush them with the sugar-water glaze, which will not only add an edge of sweetness, but also make them beautifully shiny. Refrigerate or freeze in resealable bags. To reheat, set them in a 250°F | 120°C oven for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Tips

You can of course use store-bought pork fluff. It is much lighter and flossier than the homemade stuff, and also has less flavor but a more delicate crunch, so feel free to use more. If you don't eat pork, be on the lookout for chicken (*jīsōng* 雞鬆) or fish (*yūsōng* 魚鬆) or even vegetarian fluff (*sùròusōng* 素肉鬆).



Yes, please

Nowadays you can find all sorts of pork fluff on the market. One is called *ròusū* 肉酥 and seems to be more or less the same thing as pork fluff, or *ròusōng* 肉鬆. Often stacked nearby will be containers of *ròupú* 肉脯, and from what I can figure out, these are more or less the same thing, just longer and consisting of slightly coarser threads than *ròusōng*.

Again, you can use fluff of some sort here or leave it out. These buns will be fantastic any way you do them.

at [December 02, 2019](#)

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