Main dishes / Japan

Gyoza — Pan-Fried Pork & Cabbage Dumplings

Thin-skinned crescents of pork and cabbage that are steamed and then seared in a single unbroken maneuver, producing a crisp caramelized bottom and a taut, translucent top. They release from the pan in one dramatic sheet.

Time 90 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 200 g Ground pork (20–25% fat)
- ☐ 150 g Napa cabbage, finely minced
- ☐ 30 pc Gyoza wrappers (round, store-bought or homemade)
- ☐ 8 g Garlic, minced to paste
- ☐ 8 g Ginger, freshly grated
- ☐ 30 g Garlic chives (nira), thinly sliced
- ☐ 15 ml Soy sauce
- ☐ 10 ml Sesame oil, toasted
- ☐ 3 g Fine sea salt
- ☐ 1 g White pepper, ground
- ☐ 20 ml Neutral oil for frying (rice bran)
- ☐ 80 ml Water (for steam-frying)

Let's make it.

01 Mince the napa cabbage very finely — each piece no larger than a sesame seed. Toss with the full measure of salt in a large bowl and massage it briefly. Let stand 10 minutes. The salt will pull an astonishing volume of water from the cabbage — you want to remove it, not cook with it. After 10 minutes, gather the cabbage in a clean cloth or your fist and squeeze with real force, twisting until almost no liquid drips. Do not skip this step. Wet cabbage will steam the dumpling from the inside during frying, preventing the bottom from crisping and causing the filling to become watery and loose. The squeezed cabbage should feel almost dry, reduced to roughly one-third its original volume.

02 Combine the squeezed cabbage with the ground pork, garlic paste, grated ginger, garlic chives, soy sauce, sesame oil, and white pepper in a large bowl. Mix using your hand (not a spoon) in one direction only — always clockwise or always counter-clockwise. This directional mixing aligns the proteins and builds a light binding structure that helps the filling stay cohesive when bitten. Mix for 90 seconds until the filling feels slightly sticky and holds its shape when pinched. Do not overwork or the pork fat will break and the filling will be greasy. Taste the raw filling — Japanese cooks taste it raw to calibrate seasoning. It should taste assertively seasoned, because the wrapper will dilute the flavors. Adjust soy sauce if needed.

03 Work with one wrapper at a time, keeping the others under a damp cloth. Place a wrapper on your non-dominant palm. Spoon 10–12 g of filling (roughly a leveled teaspoon) into the center — do not overfill. Dip your finger in water and wet the entire rim of the wrapper. Fold the wrapper in half to form a half-moon, pinching the center point closed with thumb and forefinger. Now pleat only the front side: starting from the center, push the front skin into three or four small folds toward the right, then repeat to the left. The back skin should remain smooth — this asymmetry is what creates the characteristic crescent and ensures the gyoza stands upright. Press each pleat firmly against the smooth back to seal. Place sealed side down on a parchment-lined tray. The base should be flat enough to sit without wobbling.

04 Heat a flat-bottomed non-stick or carbon-steel skillet over medium-high until a drop of water skips and evaporates instantly. Add the neutral oil and swirl to coat. Working quickly, arrange the gyoza flat-side down in tight concentric rows or a single layer — they can touch. Fry undisturbed for 90 seconds until the bottoms are pale golden. Now pour in the water all at once: it will scream and steam violently. Immediately cover with a tight-fitting lid. The steam will cook the tops and fill the interior. Steam-fry 5–6 minutes until the water has entirely evaporated — you will hear the sizzle change from a wet hiss to a dry crackle. Remove the lid and fry 1–2 more minutes until the bottoms are deep amber and the skin pulls slightly away from the pan. Drizzle a few drops of sesame oil around the edge if desired. Invert onto a plate in one motion so the golden bases face up.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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