

BEEF MOMOS (TIBETAN DUMPLINGS) RECIPE BY TENZIN CHOEGYAL

DESCRIPTION

Given its high altitude and harsh climate, Tibetan cuisine traditionally relied upon a reasonably small number of ingredients, most commonly barley, dairy and meat products. In nomad families like mine, ground roasted barley was mixed with butter tea to make the staple food 'tsampa' and large pots of savoury handmade noodle soups (thunkpa) would cook for hours in the tents, providing not only sustenance but warmth to the family.

I grew up in the Tibetan Children's Village in the refugee community in Dharamsala, India, an institution which housed and educated thousands of children, many of whom were orphans or separated from their parents. As a result, our diet diversified to include Indian ingredients and our menu expanded to include Dahl and other vegetarian dishes flavoured with a plethora of before unknown spices.

Momos however remained our most prized dish, made on Tibetan New Year (Losar) or other special occasions. Making Momos is a little time consuming and therefore becomes a communal effort, bringing together friends and family who chat, sing and laugh while constructing the beautiful dumplings. I have happy memories of annual visits to my mother's house and making Momos with my mother and siblings in her small kitchen, while singing the songs of our nomadic ancestors. Vegetarian options have become more popular since coming into exile, but here I will share a recipe for traditional meat Momos.

INGREDIENTS

For the dough

- Water
- 5 Cups Plain All Purpose Flour

For the Filling

- 600g Beef Mince
- 4 White or Brown Onions (Finely Chopped)
- Large Bunch of Garlic Chives
- 2 Tsp Salt
- 1 Tsp Ground Cumin
- Splash of Soy Sauce
- Splash of Sesame Oil (optional)

METHOD

1. Mix the flour and small amounts of water and knead into a soft but not sticky dough.
2. Cover and leave aside while making the filling.
3. In a large bowl, combine all filling ingredients and mix well.
4. Gently re-knead the dough and separate into a few thick 'ropes'. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough sections into fairly thin sheets and using a dough cutter or unturned glass, cut out rounds of approximately 10cm diameter.
5. Repeat with the rest of the dough, taking care not to let the earlier dough dry out. This is where the communal part comes in handy - someone making the dough rounds while others add the filling.

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METHOD

6. Add about one tablespoon of filling to the dough rounds and using thumb and forefinger, create pleats to seal the Momo. There are a number of different designs that can be used here, but I will demonstrate two of the most popular - crescent moon and full moon.

7. Oil a steamer (Vegetable Oil) and place Momos into the steamer in a single layer, not touching, and steam over boiling water for 13-15 minutes. Take care when oiling the steamer and removing the Momos as you don't want them to stick, break and lose all the delicious savoury 'soup' that has been created inside.

8. When eating Momos, it is best to take a small bite from the bottom first and suck out all this wonderful soup. If you take a big bite then you may end up with Momo juices everywhere!

To accompany the Momos, we traditionally make achilli sauce which may contain fresh chilli or chilli powder, tomatoes, coriander and salt, or a combination of chilli and soy sauce.