



ANDREA NGUYEN'S

Pass the Fish Sauce

recipe

Sweet Potato, Shrimp, and Lemongrass Dumplings

Cucur Badak

For the flour, use 3/4 cup (3.75 oz) for a 3/4-pound potato or 1 cup (5 oz) for a 1 pound potato.

Makes 16 dumplings

Filling

- 3 tablespoons (3/4 ounce) dried shrimp
- 1 stalk lemongrass
- 1 shallot, chopped (1/4 cup total)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger
- 1 or 2 red Thai chiles, chopped
- 2 tablespoons canola or peanut oil
- 1/2 cup fresh or thawed, frozen grated coconut
- 1 pinch ground turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

- 3/4 to 1 pound sweet potato (1 medium or medium-large one)
- Generous 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 3/4 to 5 ounces (3/4 to 1 cup) all-purpose bleached or unbleached flour, plus extra for dusting
- 16 medium white shell-on shrimp, trimmed of feet and tails (use scissors to snip), optional
- Canola or peanut oil for deep-frying

Make the filling

1. Put the dried shrimp in a small bowl, add warm water to cover, and set aside to soften for 10 to 15 minutes. Rinse, drain well, and then roughly chop. Set aside.
2. Trim the lemongrass stalk by removing any hard or loose parts that will be difficult to cut. To do that, peel off any dry or loose outer layers. Then, cut off the bottom part between the end and just below the widest point of the bulbous portion. Finish by cutting

off the dry, tough portion at the top. The remaining stalk should be smooth and firm.

Cut the trimmed stalk into 3 or 4-inch sections, then halve each lengthwise. Working with two halves at a time, put them cut side down, then cut them crosswise into thin half moons; repeat with the other halves. Finish by roughly chopping with a rocking motion of your knife. Measure 3 tablespoons and transfer to an electric mini-chopper; save the remaining lemongrass for another use.

Process the lemongrass to a fine texture, pausing to scrape down the sides as needed. Add the dried shrimp, shallot, ginger, and chiles. Process to a texture to match that of the grated coconut. Occasionally pause and scrape down the bowl to process evenly.

3. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the dried shrimp mixture and cook, stirring often, for about 1 minute, until fragrant with the smell of lemongrass and briny shrimp. Add the coconut, turmeric, sugar, and salt, and cook, stirring frequently, for about 3 minutes, until the coconut has absorbed the yellow turmeric color and the overall mixture has dried out a bit and is somewhat fluffy. Remove from the heat, taste and add extra salt or sugar, as needed. Transfer to a bowl and set aside to cool. Cover and refrigerate overnight if making in advance. You should have about 1 cup.

Make the dough

4. Peel the sweet potato, making sure you remove any hard spots that will not mash up later. Cut the potato into 1-inch chunks and then put into a steamer tray.

Steam the potato over boiling water for about 8 minutes, or until tender. Test by stabbing a few pieces with a thin-blade knife. Detach the steamer tray and set aside to cool and dry for 3 to 5 minutes; the potato mashes easily when warm and a drier potato yields less sticky dough.

5. Mash the potato and salt to a smooth texture; remove any stringy or hard bits as you mash. Then incorporate the flour in 2 batches, to create medium-firm dough. Use the potato masher or a wooden spoon to combine the ingredients at first and then switch to one hand to knead the dough in the bowl. Gather the dough into a ball and then continue kneading it for 4 to 5 minutes on a well-floured surface.

Initially, as things become hydrated, the dough will soften and become sticky. Work in extra flour as you knead; I typically work in about 2 extra tablespoons of flour. The finished dough should feel medium-soft and supple. Press your finger in and a deep indentation will remain. Cover with plastic wrap or an inverted bowl and set aside to rest for 30 minutes to relax and become earlobe soft. The dough can sit for a few hours at room temperature, but it will soften further and become stickier, requiring extra flour when shaping the dumplings.

Assemble the dumplings

6. Cut the dough in half, keeping one half covered while you work on the other. Roll the dough into a log and cut it into 8 equal pieces. Dust your hands with flour and roll each piece into a ball; if the dough feels sticky, be liberal with the flour.

7. To make each dumpling, put it on a floured work surface and pat it with your fingers into a circle a scant 1/4-inch thick and 2 1/2 to 2 3/4 inches wide. Pick it up and press the rim with your finger tips to widen the circle to 3 to 3 1/4 inches and to make the edge thinner than the center.

Gently cup one hand and put the dough circle in that hand, placing it toward the fingertips, which will cradle the dumpling as you shape it. Place about 1 lightly packed tablespoon of filling in the center. Gently press on the filling with the back of the spoon to create a shallow well; your hand will naturally cup a little tighter. Use your free hand to gather, pleat, and pinch the dough together to completely enclose the filling. Pinch and twist off any excess dough. If the pleated side feels sticky, press it on some flour. Gently roll the ball between your hands to smooth out the surface. You'll end up with a 1 1/2 to 1 3/4-inch ball.

Put the ball on your work surface and gently press on it to create a thick disk that is a scant 1 inch thick and 1 3/4 to 2 inches wide. If using the shrimp garnish, finish the dumpling with a shrimp, bending

the shrimp to create a C-shape, and press it into the dough to ensure it sticks. Regardless, put the shaped dumpling on parchment paper that has been dusted with flour. Repeat to make more dumplings from the cut pieces of dough before working on the remaining half of dough.

Fry the dumplings

8. Use a medium saucepan, wok, or deep skillet to fry the dumplings. Pour in the oil to a depth of 1 inch and heat over medium-high heat to 325°F on a deep-fry thermometer. (If you don't have a deep-fry thermometer, stick a *dry* bamboo chopstick into the oil; if bubbles rise after 1 to 2 seconds, the oil is ready.)

Fry the dumplings in batches for about 3 minutes, stirring and turning often, until browned on both sides. Take care to adjust the heat in between batches; aim to keep the temperature at or below 325°F as a higher temperature browns the dumplings too quickly and creates too many large blisters, which affects their appearance, not their flavor. Drain the dumplings on a paper towel-lined platter. Let them cool for about 5 minutes before serving.

Leftover dumplings may be refrigerated and reheated in a 350°F oven for about 10 minutes, until hot. They may be frozen for up to a month too; thaw completely before reheating.