



MARGEE/EXPRESS

Envelopes, Please

From pierogi to empanadas, dumplings rate high at parties

Family lore says that my great-grandmother Kitty Ann worked as a cook for a rich farm family in the 1890s. Her boss had three sons, one of whom always took the largest piece of whatever she served. Annoyed, Kitty Ann whipped up some apple dumplings, making one turnover much larger than the others and filling it with dried beans. The greedy brother grabbed it, bit in, and broke a tooth.

When Mom told me this tale as a kid, she probably meant it as a lesson about gluttony or work ethics. But Kitty Ann knew what many cooks and party throwers know: Few can resist dough wrapped around a squishy filling. "They're labor-intensive, so people associate them with happy times," says Laura Schenone, author of "The Lost Ravioli Recipes of Hoboken"

STUFF IT: Quick dumpling options for a party range from frozen Polish pierogi (\$2.79 per package, Giant) to Indian samosas (\$3.50 for two, Delhi Dhaba).

(\$27, Norton), which tracks her quest for her great-grandmother's pasta secrets.

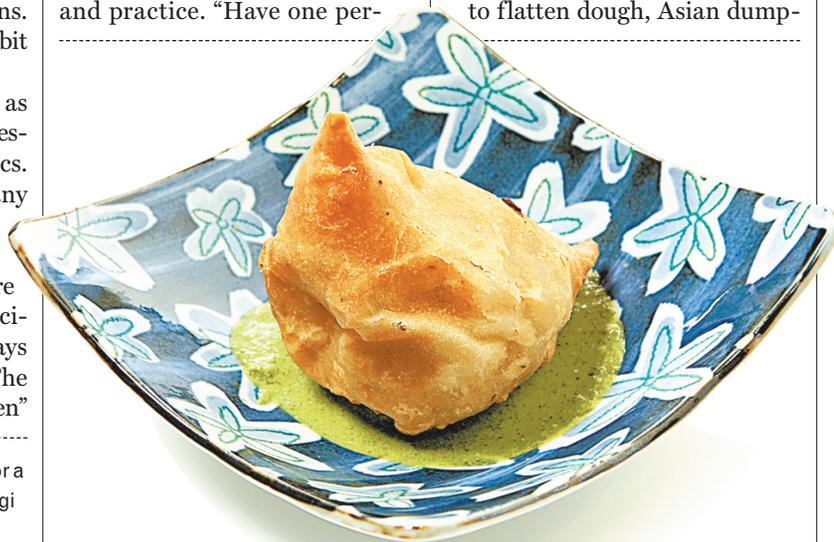
Every wheat-eating culture boasts a turnover, from Chinese shu mai (pork dumplings) to Latin American empanadas. "They're comfort food. You can't go wrong with dishes starring potatoes and bread," says Kera Carpenter, chef/owner of Petworth's W Domku (821 Upshur St. NW; 202-722-7475), which dishes out Polish pierogi and Czech potato dumplings.

Carpenter and other fans of plump pockets admit a dumplings party involves elbow grease and practice. "Have one per-

son who knows what they're doing," says Brian Yarvin, author of "A World of Dumplings: Filled Dumplings, Pockets and Little Pies From Around the Globe" (\$22, Countryman). "Kneading and rolling isn't that awesome a task."

If you don't have a pal with dumpling skills, study Ukrainian vareniki or Lebanese fatayer techniques via a book or class. L'Academie de Cuisine (Lacademie.com) offers many classes about dumplings; Taiwanese chef Rebekah Lin Jewell (Artofchinesecooking.com) teaches dim sum workshops.

The tools are basic: rolling pins to flatten dough, Asian dump-



TURNOVER TIPS

Cantonese Shrimp Dumplings

MAKES 50

- **Dumpling wrappers** (recipe below)
- **1 lb. raw shrimp, shelled & deveined**
- **3 scallions**
- **6 water chestnuts**
- **2 egg whites**
- **1 1/2 tsps. cornstarch**
- **1 tsp. salt**
- **1/2 tsp. ground white pepper**
- **1 tsp. soy sauce**
- **1 tsp. peanut oil**
- **Napa cabbage leaves, for steaming**

COMBINE shrimp, scallions, water chestnuts, egg whites, cornstarch, salt, pepper, soy sauce and peanut oil in a food processor. Pulse into a coarse paste. Fill wrappers by placing a teaspoon of filling in the center of the round wrapper and squashing the edges shut with a fork or dumpling press. If you are using store-bought wrappers, you'll need to moisten the edges with water to make them stick. Line a bamboo steamer basket with a single layer of cabbage leaves, then steam dumpling over medium heat for eight minutes. Serve with soy sauce.

Dumpling Wrappers

- **3 c flour**
- **1 c boiling water**

PUT FLOUR in bowl; add water. Use wooden spoon to get mixture blended. When mixture has cooled a bit, knead dough for about seven minutes or until a poke with a finger causes it to bounce back. Cover dough in plastic wrap; refrigerate for 30 minutes. Then, use thumb to poke a hole in center. Enlarge the hole until it looks like a large bagel. Squeeze dough until it forms a rope about 3/4 inch in diameter. To make wrappers, slice dough into pieces about 3/4 inch long. Roll each into a ball. On a floured surface, roll out the ball into a disk about 3 inches in diameter. (Parchment paper in between dough and rolling pin makes things easier.) Store wrappers between sheets of waxed paper so they don't dry out.

ADAPTED FROM "A WORLD OF DUMPLINGS: FILLED DUMPLINGS, POCKETS AND LITTLE PIES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE" BY BRIAN YARVIN. © 2007, THE COUNTRYMAN PRESS

ling crimpers to close up pies (\$5, Surlatable.com) and bamboo steamers or frying pans for cooking 'em. For ravioli, a pasta machine is handy.

Letting guests in on the process is an ice-breaker and time-saver. "Look at it as a fun project," says Schenone. Set up an assembly line with one person rolling out dough, someone else stuffing pies and another guest boiling or frying.

When it comes to cooking, "don't be afraid of adding fat; it keeps them moisturized so they don't break apart," says chef Scott Drewno, who serves scallop/shrimp shu mai in lobster sauce. at the Source (555 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; 202-637-6100). Seal pies tightly, and don't add too much filling — stuffing can pop out during cooking.

There are shortcuts, too. "If you're in a hurry, buy round dumpling wrappers [available at Asian groceries], wrap them around something like apricot preserves, wet the edges, seal them and boil them," says Yarvin. The dough-phobic can also pick up frozen turnovers from ethnic groceries and simply boil, steam or sauté them. Think Asian potstickers from H Mart (8103 Lee Hwy., Falls Church; 703-573-6300) or pierogi stuffed with things like sauerkraut and mushrooms from Kielbasa Factory (1073 Rockville Pike, Rockville; 240-453-9090).

Take-out turnovers are also an option, but stick with baked or fried treats; boiled dumplings clump together in transport. Good bets: Bolivian salteñas from Tutto Bene (501 N. Randolph St., Arlington; 703-522-1005) or veggie samosas from Delhi Dhaba (4455 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-537-1008).

On the side, serve either trad dippers (soy/chili sauce for Chinese potstickers), or put new twists on old recipes, like W Domku's Czech potato dumplings, which lurk under a mushroom-Parmesan hash. Side salads and veggies keep guests from falling into carb comas. But Drewno thinks that hosts should just go dim-sum dumpling crazy. "There are 150 different kinds," he says.

From-scratch dumplings demand effort, but the age-old pies end up being at once soothing and mysterious. You never know what you're going to get when you bite in. "There's something transporting about starting with a lump of dough and turning it into something delicious," says Schenone. JENNIFER BARGER (EXPRESS)