



## How to make Char Siu Bao like the professional chef

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Recipe type: Breakfast

Cuisine: Chinese

Prep time: 60 mins

Cook time: 10 mins

Total time: 1 hour 10 mins

Serves: 12

### Ingredients:

Dough starter

- 200g of pao flour
- 10g of dry yeast
- 145g of icing sugar
- 285ml of lukewarm water

Other ingredients of the dough:

- 10g of baking powder
- 400g of pao flour
- ¼ teaspoon of vinegar (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon of ammonium bicarbonate (optional)
- 50g of shortening
- 2g of salt

#### Filling:

- 400g of diced chicken breast meat
- 60g (4 tablespoons) of sugar
- 12g (2½ teaspoons) of cornstarch
- 200ml of water
- 70g (4½ tablespoons) of oyster sauce
- 25g (5 teaspoons) of light soy sauce
- 35g (7 teaspoons) of dark soy sauce
- 50g of onion
- 1 teaspoon of 5 spices powder
- 45ml (3 tablespoons) of oil

#### Instructions

##### Fillings:

1. Heat 3 tablespoons of oil in a pan or wok, sauté the onion for 1 to 2 minutes until soft and transparent. Add the diced chicken breast meat and sauté until the chicken is cooked.
2. Add the remaining ingredients. Stir and cook until the gravy thickens.
3. Transfer to a plate and let it cool.

##### Dough:

1. Dissolve the dry yeast in water.
2. Add 200g of pao flour and icing sugar. Mix well and cover for an hour.
3. Add the remaining items into the starter mixture and knead for 8 to 10 minutes.
4. Cover the dough with a piece of damp cloth and let it prove for 30 minutes, or until the size has doubled.
5. Divide the dough into 50g portions. Let the dough rest for 10 minutes.
6. Flatten the dough with a rolling pin to form a circle of 8-10 cm in diameter. Place 30g of filling in the middle, wrap and pleat the dough to seal. Place it on a 1.5 inches (4cm) square baking paper, sealed side up.
7. Place the Char Siu Pao in a steamer, leave about 2-3 cm gap in between each Char Siu Pao. Steam in a preheated steamer on high heat for 8 minutes.
8. Remove the Char Siu Pao immediately from the steamer and cool them on a rack to prevent the bottom of the Char Siu Pao from becoming soggy.

#### Nutrition Information

Serving size: 1522g Calories: 4603 Fat: 110g Saturated fat: 25g Trans fat: 0.1g  
Carbohydrates: 717g Sugar: 227g Fiber: 20g Protein: 185g Cholesterol: 308mg

# How to make Char Siu Bao like the professional chef

## How to prepare the juicy filling



You can use more water than stated to cook the filling. It is important to cook it until the gravy is thick enough. If it is too thick, the filling will not be juicy. If it is too diluted, it is difficult to seal the ingredients in the dough. I have water as part of the ingredients to

cook the filling in the recipe, but you may notice that I actually did not add any when I demonstrate in the video. This entirely depends on you. As long as the consistency is just like what I show in the video, it, should be good to go.

## Choose the best flour to make the Char Siu Bao

Use the right type of flour to make Char Siu Bao. I have seen different types of flour suggested by chefs, and I would like to elaborate a little on this subject.

The suitable types of flour for making Char Siu Bao is Pao flour or Hong Kong flour. The low percentage of protein of these types of flour will produce the optimum amount of gluten required for bouncy and soft buns. Both are bleached and can produce white buns normally seen in dim sum stores.

The difference between Pao flour and Hong Kong flour is that yeast is added to Pao flour, and it is not added to Hong Kong flour. You can add more dry yeast even if you use Pao flour just in case the yeast is inactive. If you have difficulty to get Pao flour,

you can use cake flour as it contains a similar percentage of gluten, but the color of the Pao will be slightly yellowish.

Freshly milled flour is bleached and the natural color is yellowish. Bleaching will not only whiten the flour to make it more appealing, but it also breaks down the gluten level further and makes the flour softer. Wheat flour contains protein and when it comes to contact with water, it develops **gluten**, which gives elasticity and strength to baked goods. Different baking items need different percentages of protein for optimum gluten development. Here is the summary:

- Cake flour - 6-8% protein
- Pastry flour, Pao flour, Hong Kong flour ( also known as Waterlily flour = 香港水仙面粉) 8-10% protein
- Self raising flour - 8-9% protein
- All purpose and plain flour - 10-12% protein
- Bread flour - 12-14% protein



## **What other meat is suitable besides pork for making Char Siu Pao?**

Traditionally, barbecue pork ( char siu 叉烧) is used. You can use chicken breast meat as it is suitable for all races and religion. The flavor is very close to that of pork.

When you prepare the filling, there are a few points that you need to note:

1. Sauté the onion until it turns fragrant before adding the chicken meat.
2. Combine the cornflour with water to form a slurry before mixing it with the meat, or you can just mix EVERYTHING together. It really does not matter.

## **3 Leavening agents to ensure it is soft and tender**

There are three leavening agents used in the recipe.

Both baking powder (sodium bicarbonate) and yeast are used to achieve the bouncy and soft texture. Both are quite common in baking, but you may be unfamiliar with ammonium bicarbonate.

Ammonium bicarbonate ( commonly known as 臭粉 In Chinese ) is a leavening agent nowadays seldom used. It is also hardly used in any western baking products. It is used in the recipe to serve a special purpose- to produce the signature bursting surface of the Pao.. The professional finishing of Char Siu Bao should be burst ( 开花 ) into three or four parts on the surface, much like the crevices on top of a hot cross bun. It is created by using ammonium bicarbonate instead of cutting lines on the surface as for bread.

You can omit ammonium bicarbonate as it does not contribute to the flavor of the Char Siu Bao. The only difference is that the surface may not burst into parts, the 'professional' finishing of Char Siu Bao.





## The right way to knead the dough



Dough making is quite similar to making bread. Some chefs prefer to prepare a starter just like for making bread, as in this recipe. In this case, part of the flour will be used to prepare the starter. The flour will ferment longer which results in a better flavor.

Some less common ingredients in dough making explained

## Is lye water necessary in the recipe?

Lye water ( 碱水 )- some recipes suggest adding lye water into the dough. Our recipe has no lye water. There is a problem if you add too much lye water as it will leave a bitter taste to the Pao. I do not use lye water in this recipe.

## **How about include wheat starch in the recipe?**

Wheat starch (澄面粉) can be added into the recipe in a smaller amount. Wheat starch can produce a very soft and bouncy texture since wheat starch has no protein. The Pao made by following this recipe is quite soft and there is no need to add wheat starch.

## **How about adding vinegar to the recipe?**

Vinegar is added for a purpose. Since wheat starch has no protein, and Pao or Hong Kong flour has a low protein content, the development of gluten that contributes to the strength, and texture will be limited. The ideal pH for gluten development is 5-6. This will encourage gluten development and produce a more extensible (easier to stretch) dough. Vinegar helps to maintain the pH of the dough so that it is not too alkaline due to the use of baking powder and ammonium bicarbonate. This will produce Pao with good texture and yet is bouncy and soft.

However, I have tested my pao recipe and noticed that as long as the oil and the flour are white, there is no need to add any vinegar. Therefore, I do not include vinegar in my recipe.

## **How to make the bun whiter than snow white**

A number of recipes suggest that vinegar can whiten the dough. However, we have tried to make Pao with and without vinegar, and the color of the Pao is identical.

The answer to the snowy white Char Siu Bao lies in the color of the flour and oil that you use. Hong Kong flour and Pao flour are bleached and will produce white Pao. If you use the standard cake or all purpose flour, the color of the Char Siu Bao will be slightly yellowish.

The type of oil you use will affect the color of the Pao. If you use vegetable or animal oil, the Pao will be slightly yellowish. We use shortening of soy origin to produce a

snowy white Pao. If you want to use a healthier alternative, use unbleached flour and vegetable oil instead of bleached flour and shortening, The flavor will not be affected. But the Pao will not be as white as those from a professional dim sum shop.

## How to wrap the filling- best to watch the video

[\(click here to watch the video\)](#)



The best way to understand how to wrap the filling is to watch the embedded video. The following is the summary:

1. Roll out the dough to a round shape, but leave the center slightly thicker as this is the bottom part of the Pao.
2. Wrap and pleat the dough to seal the filling.
3. It is not necessary to seal the Pao dough tightly, Just folding and slightly squeezing with your fingers is sufficient. This is different from shaping the pie crust, where the line formed by you will stay even after baking. Most of the folding lines will disappear after steaming due to the strong leavening action by baking powder and yeast. It is (traditionally) acceptable if the dough is 'erupted' due to the rapid expansion of volume during steaming and review part of the filling.

## The right way to steam the Char Siu Pao

1. Place each Pao seal side up on a small piece of oiled baking paper.
2. Place the Pao in a steamer tray. Make sure the water is boiled rapidly.



3. Steam the Pao on high heat for eight minutes with plenty of water and covered at all times during the entire steaming process.

4. Please note the the bigger the paos, the longer you need to steam them. There will be a starchy taste for paos that are not fully cooked. It is harmless to steam a little longer than suggested.

### **How to keep the Char Siu Pao for an extended period**

1. You may want to make a large batch of Char Siu Bao but and keep part of it. The best way is to steam only the number of pao you want, and froze the raw pao (with the cooked filling inside). The is the same way how to keep the raw dough of bread in the bakery.

2. Place the freshly wrapped bao on a large baking tray. Put the tray of bao in the freezer until the baos are hard enough. Keep them in a plastic container and keep in the freezer until you want to steam them.

3. Arrange the frozen bao on a steamer tray and wait until it is at room temperature. You can now steam the bao just like the fresh one.



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