

Takayama Steamed Buns

I have many fond food memories of my trip to Japan; exquisite seafood, wonderful interpretations of French cuisine, artful homages to simple seasonal ingredients as well as tasty lip smacking snacks to enjoy with beer. Takayama is noted for its wagu beef. The Japanese flock to traditional inns in this alpine town to enjoy the hot spring baths and kaiseki meals, highlighting this melt in your mouth beef. A Takayama treat is also biting into a hot steamed beef bun from one of the specialty street vendors. The fluffy bread dough encases a rich beef and shiitake filling, a perfect package when strolling through the town on a cold night. Unlike the steamed buns available at Yum Cha places here this Japanese version is not overtly sweet. The traditional Japanese bun dough is not pleated like a Chinese dumpling but smooth with a decorative branded imprint on the surface. This recipe is one I devised to try and replicate these delicious beef buns. I think they will be perfect for watching the Tokyo olympics.



Hida-Takayama's famous street food.



A Kyoto version of the beef bun.

Steamed Beef Bun

makes 8

Dough

- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 cup bread flour
- 1 tsp dried yeast
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1 tbs peanut oil
- water to form a soft dough

Mix dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add oil and enough water to make a soft dough. Knead by hand or in a stand mixer with a dough hook. Knead for 10 minutes, until smooth. Cover and leave to rise in a warm place until double in size.

Filling

- peanut oil
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- 4 fresh or dried and soaked shiitake mushrooms, finely diced
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbs grated ginger
- 200 g beef filet, finely cut
- 1 scant tbs cornflour
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 1 scant tbs red miso paste
- 1 scant tbs soy sauce
- Approx. 100 ml water

Saute the shallot, garlic, mushroom, and ginger in peanut oil until soft. Add the beef and cornflour and stir to mix in the flour. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir well. Add a touch of water to deglaze and just bring the ingredients together into a thick paste. Cool.

Assembly and Steaming

Divide the dough into 8 balls and rest.

Flatten each ball, cupping it in one hand while you fill the cavity with a spoonful of filling. Pinch the ball closed and roll to make a smooth ball, placing the pinched side face down on an oiled muffin paper. Place in a bamboo steamer. They will expand on steaming, so it is best to do them in two batches. Steam in a wok on high heat for 20 minutes. You may need to top up with boiling water after 10 minutes.

Optional. Heat a metal skewer at the loop end in the gas flame until red hot and use it to brand the top of the buns with a decorative pattern. I could get better at this but I was getting hungry. ☹️

