

## Chinese Sweet Red Bean Steamed Buns

<http://userealbutter.com/2011/12/31/chinese-sweet-red-bean-buns-recipe/>

*from Chinese Snacks by Huang Su-Huei*

### filling

24 oz (one can) of sweet red bean paste (azuki bean paste) or homemade (I'm not there yet)

### dough

1/4 cup sugar

1 3/4 cup warm water (105°F – 115°F)

1 tbsp yeast

6 cups flour

1 tbsp baking powder

2 tbsps shortening

Refrigerate the sweet bean paste.

In a medium bowl, dissolve the sugar in warm water and add the yeast. Let the yeast stand for about ten minutes or until it becomes foamy, floating to the top. Sift the flour (I never sift anything) into a large bowl. Add the baking powder, shortening, and the yeast liquid. Mix well. If the dough is dry, add a little water. If the dough is too wet, add more flour. Knead the dough until smooth (took me ten minutes by hand) Place the dough in a large bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Let the dough rise in a warm place for a couple of hours until it has tripled in size.

Cut 24 squares of parchment or wax paper, 2 1/2-inches a side.

Roll the sweet bean paste into 1-ounce balls (or if you are confident in your wrapping skills, you can skip this step and just spoon filling into the dough). Return to refrigerator until ready to wrap the bao.

Knead the risen dough until it is smooth and elastic. Again, if it is too dry, wet your hand (s) and knead it – if it is too wet, add some flour and knead it in. Because I work on a finite area cutting board (i.e. not a long counter), I found it easiest to cut the dough into quarters and make a log from each quarter. Keep the unused dough under plastic or a damp kitchen towel to prevent drying out. Cut each log into 6 equal pieces and flatten each piece with your hand to make a disc. Use your fingers to pinch the outer inch of the disc thinner than the center. Then shape a sort of well in the thicker center of the dough. Place a ball of red bean paste or spoon 2 tablespoons into the center of the dough. Pleat the edges together, with the intent of gathering the edges to form a sort of bowl from the dough (use your thumb or spoon to push the filling down). Twist and pinch the pleats together at the top. If there is excess dough, pinch it off. Set the bao on a square of parchment with the pleats-side down. Repeat for the rest and let them stand for about 10-30 minutes.

Place the buns in a steamer with at least 2 inches between them as they will expand during steaming. If you can't fit them all in, not to worry – just do it in batches.

If you have a wok, bring 2 inches of water to a boil and set your steamer over the wok. If you don't have a wok (I don't) then this is what I did: I found a stockpot that fits my generic bamboo steamer perfectly. The fit doesn't have to be perfect, just don't use such a large pot that the steam escapes. I filled the stockpot with 2 inches of water and then placed a small metal rack (you can find these in random Asian grocery stores) in the center. Bring the water to a boil, place the steamer on the rack. If you steam multiple batches, please be sure there is an adequate amount of water in the pot each time.

Steam for 10 minutes. Serve hot. Makes 24.

**Storage:** Once cooled, you can seal these in an airtight container or ziploc bag and keep in the refrigerator for up to a week. To reheat, either steam them again for a few minutes or do the ghetto method: place the bao in a bowl, cover with a plate, and microwave for a minute or two. You can also freeze the bao in a sealed bag and reheat them by either steaming or nuking (just add more time than if they were refrigerated).