

## Culinary

FLAVOR

Dip into  
Dumplings

Once known only as dim sum darlings, dumplings are gaining widespread appeal across cuisines.

By Melanie Wolkoff Wachsman

The question Chris Santos, chef at The Stanton Social, New York, asked was simple: How can soup easily and neatly be shared? The answer proved more challenging. As Santos tested ways to make French onion soup fit into the restaurant's concept of "upscale finger food," he didn't like the solutions he discovered, until an unlikely source—Chinatown—inspired him.

"I thought about Chinese soup dumplings. Dumplings are the ultimate finger food—juicy, plump pouches of goodness," says Santos, who reconfigured French onion soup into bite-size servings reminiscent of traditional Chinese dumplings. He serves the dumplings in an escargot dish, and covers the gratinée with melted Gruyère and croutons.

"People love onion soup's cheesy crouton topping, but once that's gone, there's a bowl of onions left over. With the dumplings, you get all the 'soup' flavor in one bite with no leftover onions," Santos says. "To be honest," he adds, "I didn't think people would get it."

Fortunately, Santos was wrong. The dumplings have become such a signature item that the restaurant sells an estimated 800 pieces a day. "Just about every table orders them, which is impressive, because we have around 50 menu items," Santos says. "The dumplings almost always get chosen."

Santos and other chefs are discovering that dumplings aren't limited to Chinese-cuisine eateries. Many chefs capitalize on dumplings' crossover appeal by melding traditional Chinese preparations with personal touches.

Chris Santos reconfigured French onion soup into bite-size dumplings that have become a signature item at Stanton Social.



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