



An old photo of the Nanxiang restaurant in Yuyuan Garden malls in 1930. — Jiang Xiaowei

# Why we're super excited about small steamed buns

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Whoever made this (*xiaolongbao*), whoever found that idea, deserves like a Nobel Peace Prize in food.

**Martina Sazunic and Simon Stawski**  
Popular blogger

**Yang Jian**

It is hard to find another food that is so deeply loved by Shanghai natives, those from elsewhere in China as well as people abroad, than *xiaolongbao*, or small steamed buns.

The buns, featuring a pork filling, thin wrapping and succulent soup, are served hot with vinegar and ginger after being freshly steamed.

The buns are made with simple ingredients – flour and pork, but have a profound history and represent integrated cultures, just like the city of Shanghai.

The buns have become a popular topic among overseas viewers on TikTok with nearly 200 million views in 2021.

The buns are an icon of Haipai, or the Shanghai-style culture, blending the tradition and fashion of Shanghai. Even the city's official WeChat account, *Shanghaifabu*, features the buns as the image of its mascot.

Numerous illustrious celebrities have



A chef at Jiajia wraps a small steamed bun. — IC

become fans of the Shanghai steamed buns over the years, including Hollywood legend Charlie Chaplin and British philosopher Bertrand Russell. The traditional snacks were also served to foreign dignitaries such as Queen Elizabeth II and former US president Bill Clinton.

Popular blogger Martina Sazunic and Simon Stawski from Canada said “whoever made this, whoever found

that idea, deserves like a Nobel Peace Prize in food” after tasting the steamed buns.

Chef Christopher Cavish from Miami wrote a guidance of Shanghai small steamed buns for local diners after tasting 52 local restaurants in a year and a half.

“Fuchun small steamed buns taste like a marriage lasting for half a century, slovenly but still in love,” Cavish writes in the guidance.

In fact, the small steamed buns did not originate in Shanghai. Their birthplace is said to be Changzhou, in neighboring Zhejiang Province, in mid-1800s.

Shanghai has various schools for making the buns, including those from Suzhou, Nanjing and Wuxi in neighboring Jiangsu Province, and has developed its own characteristics and world-famous brand.

Nanxiang is the synonym of Shanghai small steamed buns. The brand was founded in 1871 by restaurant owner Huang Mingxuan in Nanxiang Town in the outskirt Jiading District.