

Saturday, September 26: Global Taco & Cocktail Pairings



Traditional: Chicken Tinga Tacos

MAKES 16 TACOS

Popular in Mexico City and the state of Puebla, the spicy, smoky-sweet chipotle chile sauce called *tinga* transforms plain chicken into something downright addictive. Silvana Salcido Esparza, chef of the popular Barrio Café in Phoenix and Barrio Queen in Scottsdale, Arizona, likes to pile the saucy chicken onto crisp mini tortillas for tostaditas or tuck it into these delectable tacos.

- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 tsp. *each* kosher salt and black pepper
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 1/2 tbsp. puréed canned chipotles in adobo*
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken (preferably grilled)
- 16 corn tortillas (6 in. wide), warmed*
- 1 cup thinly sliced green cabbage
- 3/4 cup pico de gallo
- 1/2 cup crumbled queso fresco*
- 2 tbsp. chopped cilantro
- 1/2 firm-ripe avocado, cut into small, thin slices
- 1/4 cup crema*, thinned with a little milk, if needed, so it's pourable

1. Heat 1 tbsp. oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Sauté onion a few minutes until golden, then add garlic, salt, and pepper and cook until garlic starts to brown, 30 to 60 seconds.

2. Stir in 3/4 cup water, the tomato paste, chipotle purée, and sugar; add chicken. Cook, stirring, until bubbling, about 2 minutes. Stir in more water if needed to make it saucy.

3. Set a tortilla on each of 8 plates and top one side with about 2 tbsp. chicken. Garnish with cabbage, salsa, queso fresco, cilantro, and avocado. Drizzle with crema, then fold over. Repeat with remaining tortillas and fillings.

**Find canned chipotle chiles, queso fresco, and crema at Latino markets. Purée contents of chipotle can in a blender; keeps, chilled, up to 1 month. To warm tortillas, wrap in a kitchen towel and microwave until warm and soft, about 1 minute.*

The Cocktail: Sunset Margarita

MAKES 1

The light fruitiness of the pomegranate matches and tempers the fruity heat of the adobo sauce in the chicken tinga tacos.

- 1 ½ oz. *each* tequila and triple sec
- 1 1/2 tbsp. orange juice
- 1 tbsp. lime juice
- 2 tbsp. pomegranate juice
- 1 twist fresh lime zest

1. Put about 1/2 cup ice cubes in a rocks glass. Pour in tequila, triple sec, orange juice, and lime juice. Stir well. Using the back of a soup spoon, carefully pour 2 tbsp. pomegranate juice down the inner side of glass. Garnish with a lime twist, crushed slightly just before adding.

Original fusion: Baja Fish Tacos

MAKES 6 TO 8 TACOS

There is little question that people have been eating fish tacos in the coastal areas of Mexico for an awfully long time. It probably goes back thousands of years to when indigenous North American peoples first wrapped the plentiful offshore catch into stone-ground-corn tortillas. However, the fish taco that we know today—battered, deep-fried white fish, served in a corn tortilla (often two) with shredded cabbage, sour-cream- or mayonnaise-based sauce, and a bit of salsa—came into being 50 or 60 years ago, in Baja California. According to one theory, it was invented by Japanese fishermen in Ensenada, who cloaked the fish in a tempura-style batter—a delicious example of early fusion cuisine.

- 1 cup cold lager-style Mexican beer, such as Negro Modelo
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- Vegetable oil
- 1½ lbs. firm, white-fleshed fish fillets such as Pacific cod or tilapia, cut into 1-in. wide strips
- 12 to 16 corn tortillas (6 in. wide), warmed*
- Cabbage and Cilantro Slaw (recipe follows)
- Chipotle Tartar Sauce (recipe follows)
- Lime wedges

1. In a bowl, whisk beer, flour, and salt until well blended.
2. Preheat oven to 200°. Pour about 1 in. of oil into a 10- to 12-in. nonstick frying pan (with sides at least 2 in. high); heat over medium-high heat until oil measures 360° on a deep-fry thermometer. With a fork, dip each piece of fish into beer batter, then lift out and let drain briefly. Slide fish into oil, a few pieces at a time, and cook until golden (adjust heat to maintain 360°), turning if necessary to brown on all sides, 2 to 4 minutes per batch. With a slotted spoon, transfer cooked fish to a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Keep warm in oven while frying remaining fish.
3. To assemble each taco, stack 2 warm tortillas and top with a couple of pieces of fish, then a spoonful of slaw. Serve with tartar sauce on the side to add to taste and lime wedges to squeeze over top.

** To warm tortillas, wrap in a kitchen towel and microwave until warm and soft, about 1 minute.*

Cabbage and Cilantro Slaw: In a large bowl, mix 1½ qts. finely shredded **green cabbage** (about 10 oz.), 1/3 cup chopped **cilantro**, 3 tbsp. **fresh lime juice**, 2 tbsp. **vegetable oil**, 1/4 tsp. **red chile flakes**, and **salt** to taste. Makes 4¼ cups.

Chipotle Tartar Sauce: Rinse 2 tbsp. **canned chipotle chiles in adobo sauce** and discard seeds and veins. In a blender, purée chiles with 1 cup **mayonnaise** and 1/4 cup *each* **sweet pickle relish** and chopped **white onion** until smooth. Makes 1 1/3 cups.

The Cocktail: Sunset Michelada

MAKES 1

In Mexico, a michelada can take many forms, but it always involves beer and lime juice, and usually and either tomato juice or clamato (tomato juice mixed with clam broth). Since we created this version to go with fish tacos, a Japanese-Mexican fusion dish, we added a few Japanese flavors to it.

- 2 tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. furikake (Japanese sesame-seed and dried seaweed mix)
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne
- ¾ cup lager-style Mexican beer, such as Corona or Dos Equis
- ½ cup Clamato
- About 1 ½ tsp. lime juice
- ½ tsp. soy sauce
- Couple dashes of your favorite Mexican hot sauce

1. On a small saucer, stir salt, furikake, and cayenne together with a fork. Moisten rim of a pint beer glass and its rim in the salt.
2. Fill glass halfway with ice. Pour in rest of ingredients. Stir, taste, and add more lime juice or hot sauce if you like.

Modern fusion: Mediterranean calamari tacos

MAKES 12 TO 14 TACOS

Sicily meets the south of France, with deep-fried capers and oranges in the slaw and lemon aioli on the calamari.

1 1/2 lbs. calamari tubes
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup white rice flour
1/4 tsp. cayenne
1 tsp. kosher salt
Vegetable oil for frying
12 to 14 corn tortillas (6 in.), warmed*
Fried Caper and Orange Slaw (recipe follows)
Lemon Aioli (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 200°. Cut calamari tubes into 1/2-in. rings; pat calamari mostly dry. Mix flours, cayenne, and salt in a bowl.
2. Heat 1 1/2 in. oil in a 5- to 6-qt. pan over medium-high heat to 380°. Toss one-quarter of calamari at a time in flour to coat, shaking off excess. With a slotted spoon, lower calamari into oil and cook until golden (adjust heat to maintain 380°), 2 to 3 minutes per batch. Transfer to a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Keep warm in oven as you fry remaining calamari.
3. Smear each tortilla with about 1 tbsp. aioli, then fill with calamari and slaw. Add more sauce if you like.

**If tortillas are very thin, buy double the amount and stack 2 per taco. To warm them, wrap in a kitchen towel and microwave until warm and soft, about 1 minute.*

Fried Caper and Orange Slaw

MAKES ABOUT 5 CUPS

This slaw is also delicious on pork chops, and on any kind of fish.

3 1/2 tbsp. olive oil, divided
2 tbsp. bottled large capers, patted dry
1 orange, peeled, quartered lengthwise, and sliced crosswise
1/4 cup slivered red onion
2 pinches cayenne
1 tsp. lemon juice
1 1/2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Pinch kosher salt
1 1/2 cups thinly sliced romaine lettuce leaves
1/4 cup small mint leaves

1. Heat 3 tbsp. oil in a small pot over medium-high heat. Add capers and sauté until light brown and beginning to open up, 3 minutes. Drain on paper towels.
2. In a bowl, combine oranges, onion, cayenne, lemon juice, remaining 1/2 tbsp. oil, and salt. Just before serving, add lettuce, mint, and capers and toss together.

Lemon Aioli

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Stir 1 cup **mayonnaise**, 2 tsp. minced **garlic**, and 2 to 3 tbsp. **lemon juice** together in a bowl.

The Cocktail: Peruvian Maid

MAKES 1 DRINK

This refreshing cocktail features Pisco, the brandy of Peru and Chile. It's delicious with anything fried—like the calamari tacos. Bartender Matthew Wagner of Picca Peruvian Cantina in Los Angeles gave us the recipe.

Muddle 2 slices **cucumber** and 2 **fresh mint leaves** in a cocktail shaker just until cucumber is broken up. Add 1 oz. **lime juice**, 3/4 oz. **simple syrup**, 2 oz. **pisco**, and **ice**. Shake, then strain over fresh ice into a rocks glass. Garnish with a **mint sprig** and a **cucumber spear**.

Sunday, September 27: Shared Pantry Cooking

Kimchi (Korea)

Kimchi and Avocado Quesadillas

MAKES 1

The spicy flavor of kimchi makes it a natural filling for quesadillas and a good contrast with mild, buttery avocado. You could also add grilled chicken or shrimp.

- 2 flour tortillas, 7 to 8 in. in diameter**
- 2/3 cup coarsely shredded jack cheese**
- 1/3 cup drained chopped kimchi**
- 1/2 avocado, thinly sliced**
- ¼ cup cilantro leaves, divided**
- 1 tsp. canola oil**
- 1 tbsp. toasted sesame oil**
- 2 tbsp. seasoned rice vinegar**
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame seeds**

1. Top 1 tortilla evenly with half of cheese, then kimchi, avocados, other half of cheese, some cilantro leaves, and remaining tortilla.
2. Heat canola oil in a 10-in. nonstick frying pan over medium heat. Meanwhile, mix sesame oil, vinegar, and sesame seeds in a small bowl; set aside.
3. Toast quesadilla until lightly browned and cheese has melted, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Slice quesadilla into wedges, sprinkle with remaining cilantro, and serve with sesame dipping sauce.

Preserved lemons (Morocco)

Summer Beans with Preserved Lemon, Almonds, and Rosemary

SERVES 6

Serve these beans at room temperature, or chilled as a summery salad.

- 1 1/2 lbs. green, yellow, or purple beans, stemmed**
- 3 or 4 wedges preserved lemon***
- 2 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves**
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic, minced**



Salt and black pepper
2 wedges fresh lemon
1/4 cup sliced toasted almonds

1. Bring a medium pot of water to a boil. Add beans to boiling water and cook just until tender, 3 to 6 minutes. Drain.
2. While beans are cooking, scrape seeds and pulp from preserved lemon. Rinse lemon peel, finely chop, and put in a large bowl. Stir in rosemary, olive oil, and garlic, then add beans; toss with tongs. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Just before serving, mix in almonds.

** Find preserved lemon at many well-stocked grocery stores and online. We like the ultra-flavorful, not-too-salty preserved lemons at robertlambert.com*

Smoked paprika (Spain):

Grilled lamb chops with pimentón rub

SERVES 4

The flavor of grass-fed lamb is noticeably milder than that of grain-fed. At the farmers' market, look for grass-fed lamb, or go to eatwild.com for a source near you.

4 bone-in lamb shoulder chops (preferably grass-fed), about 1/2 lb. each
About 1 1/2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. dried oregano, crumbled fine
2 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. bittersweet or sweet smoked Spanish paprika (pimentón de la Vera agridulce or pimentón de la Vera dulce)*
4 lemon wedges

1. Coat lamb all over with oil. In a small bowl, combine oregano, salt, garlic powder, and paprika. Evenly rub all over lamb, pressing it into place.
2. Chill chops on a rack set on a rimmed baking sheet, uncovered, 2 to 8 hours. Bring to room temperature during the last hour.
3. Heat grill to high (450° to 550°). Grill chops, covered, turning once, about 8 minutes total for medium-rare. Serve with lemon wedges.

** Find sweet smoked Spanish paprika at many well-stocked grocery stores and online. Bittersweet smoked Spanish paprika is a little harder to find; tienda.com and spanishtable.com both carry it.*