

Soft Shell Tacos

The taco probably originated in the Los Angeles area in the 18th century and was introduced by Mexican immigrants. Those first tacos are thought to have featured chicken, beef or pork as a filling. The seasoned ground meat taco came along later and that is what's on tonight's menu.

The original version was also served with corn tortillas. Using a flour tortilla makes it an "American" taco. Regardless of how they're served, tacos are a mainstream favorite food.

Preparation Time: 35 mins. - Servings: 2

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Organize ingredients on small plates or in bowls so they are easy to add (and more fun to cook!). Prep 2 cloves chopped garlic tonight: 1 chopped for the soft shell taco filling and 1 whole, peeled for the Salsa. Prep 2/3 C. chopped onion: 1/3 C. for the meat filling and 1/3 C. for the Salsa. Use 1-1/2 limes. Prepare dressed avocado just before dining.

Soft Shell Tacos

Filling:

1 tsp. olive oil
8 oz. plant-based ground meal starter
or
8 oz. ground turkey breast

1 clove garlic (smashed and chopped)
1/3 C. chopped yellow onion
1/3 C. red wine
1 tsp. dry oregano leaves
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1 T. mild chili powder
dash of Tabasco
1/4 C. tomato sauce
2 T. lime juice (1/2 of a lime)
2-4 soft flour or corn Tortillas (use 6" diameter size)

Condiments

1/2 C. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1/4 C. plain, nonfat yogurt
4-5 lettuce leaves (washed, rolled and sliced)
salsa (recipe above)

Quick, Low-sodium Tomato Salsa

1 clove garlic (whole, peeled)
1/3 C. sweet onion (finely-chopped)
Juice from 1 lime
1 Jalapeño pepper (seeded, finely chopped)
1 Anaheim pepper (seeded, finely chopped)
1/4 C. cilantro leaves (finely-chopped)
pinch of salt

one 15 oz. can no-salt, diced tomatoes

Dressed Avocado and Kiwi finish

Dressed Avocado:

1 avocado (peeled and sliced)
2 tsp. olive oil
1 T. lime juice

Kiwi finish:

2 kiwis (halved - one per diner)

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Today you'll be making your own seasoned ground meat taco filling. That is pretty much the extent of the cooking. I use plant-based "ground meat." The frozen plant-based crumbles work fine, but the Beyond Meat burger patties have the best flavor and contain less salt.

Quick, Low-sodium Tomato Salsa

If making by hand:

If making by hand, smash and chop the garlic. Then combine all chopped ingredients in a medium-sized bowl. Stir in diced tomatoes and let stand.

If making in a food processor:

Place all ingredients except diced tomatoes in the processor bowl and chop fine. Add the chopped tomatoes and pulse a couple of times to mix.

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Filling:

1. Using a large sauté pan, brown ground plant based choice or alternate ground turkey in oil with chopped garlic and 1/3 C. onion.
2. Add red wine, spices and Tabasco. Cook 5 minutes, stirring constantly.
3. Add tomato sauce. Toss well, cover and cook over low heat an additional 2 minutes.
4. Squeeze 2 T. lime juice (1/2 a lime) over the filling. Set aside.

When ready to serve, transfer to a bowl and place on table alongside other condiments.

Tortillas:

Warm tortillas by stacking them on a large dinner plate. Sprinkle a few drops of water over each tortilla before you stack the next one. Invert another dinner plate over the top of the first plate and warm 35-seconds on high in the microwave. You now have warmed tortillas that fold nicely over the taco ingredients.

Serve the Meal

Divide sliced avocado between diners between individual dinner plates and drizzle with lime juice/olive oil mixture. Place halved kiwis along side avocados. Leave space on plates for diners to build their tacos.

Set warmed tortillas, filling and condiments on the table in individual bowls and allow diners to assemble their own tocos. Call diners to the table.

What I've Learned from this Recipe

It's always good to make your own filling and tomato salsa. Commercially prepared seasoning packets are loaded with extra salt. The same is true with commercially prepared salsas.

Your homemade filling and salsa will taste better and fresher. They'll also be better for you.

Let us know what you think, and ask any questions you may have! chezdon@plate6.com