

Taco Salad

Tonight a mouth-watering taco salad will be the feature presentation. Shaped tortillas filled with homemade taco filling play the leading roles. They're surrounded by fresh salad greens, seared peppers with onions and lots of fresh tomatoes and cucumbers.

The salad is dressed with a light oil and vinegar dressing while the star attraction is dressed with low-sodium tomato salsa. A touch of savory grated sharp cheddar cheese finishes the presentation. What a show! **Preparation time: 40 mins. Serves: 2.**

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Prep and organize ingredients so they are easy to add as you need them.

You'll prep a total of 2 cloves of chopped garlic: 1 clove in Taco Filling and 1 clove in Quick Tomato Salsa. Prep a total of 3/4 C. onion: 1/4 C. chopped onion in Taco Filling, 1/2 C. chopped onion in Quick Tomato Salsa and 1/2 C. sliced onion for the Seared Onions and Peppers.

Tortillas/Seared Onions and Peppers

Shaped Tortillas:

two 6" soft corn or wheat flour tortillas

Seared Onions and Peppers:

2 tsp. canola oil

1/2 C. onions (thin sliced/quartered)

1/2 C. green pepper (cut into 1" strips)

1/2 C. red pepper (cut into 1" strips)

Quick, Low-sodium Tomato Salsa

1 clove garlic (smashed and chopped)

1/2 C. onion (chopped)

1/2 jalapeño pepper (seeded/coarsely chopped)

1 Anaheim Pepper (seeded/coarsely chopped)

1/3 C. fresh cilantro (chopped)

Juice from 1 lime

pinch of salt

one 15 oz. can no-salt diced tomatoes

Il Simplicio Dressing

3 T. extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 tsp. prepared mustard

2 T. rice wine vinegar

1/4 C. low-sodium vegetable broth

pinch of salt

Taco Filling

1 tsp. olive oil

1/4 C. onion (chopped)

1 clove garlic (smashed and chopped)

8 oz. lean ground beef or plant-based choice

1/2 tsp. dry oregano leaves

1/2 tsp. dry basil leaves

2 tsp. chili powder

1/4 tsp. ground cumin

1/4 C. white wine

dash of Tabasco

Salad Ingredients

8 leaf lettuce leaves (rolled and thin-sliced)

1 C. cucumber (peeled and chopped)

2 Roma tomatoes (chopped)

- or -

10 cherry tomatoes (halved)

1 avocado (sliced)

2/3 C. Quick, Low-sodium Tomato Salsa

1/3 C. plain, nonfat yogurt

1/4 C. sharp cheddar cheese (shredded)

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Now that you've prepped ingredients, you have only a few easy steps left to complete the meal.

Shape tortillas:

Tortillas/Seared Onions and Peppers

1. Start by sprinkling tortillas with a little water and setting them over the opening of a 5" diameter bowl. (You're essentially creating a tortilla lid over the bowl.)
2. Warm bowl with tortilla lid in the microwave for 25 seconds. Remove from the microwave and push the warm, softened tortilla into the bowl as you shape it creating fluted edges. Leave shaped tortilla in the bowl and set aside to cool. Repeat process with second tortilla using another 5" bowl.

Seared Onions and Peppers:

Using a medium-sized sauté pan, heat canola oil until it shimmers. Add sliced onions and peppers and toss until edges start to turn brown. Set aside on a plate.

Taco filling

1. Using the same medium sauté pan, toss chopped onion and garlic in oil for 1-minute over medium-high heat.
2. Add meat, or plant based option, spices, white wine and Tabasco. Toss over medium-high heat until it browns. Remove from heat and set aside.

Quick, Low-sodium Tomato Salsa

If assembling by hand: Chop ingredients as indicated in prep. Place all ingredients in a medium-sized bowl. Stir together with tomatoes.

If using a food processor: Place all items (except tomatoes) in food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add the tomatoes and pulse a few times to mix.

Il Simplicio Dressing, Salad Ingredients

1. Make Il Simplicio dressing. Shake all ingredients in a small jar with a tight-fitting lid.
2. Place sliced lettuce leaves in a large bowl with cucumbers and tomatoes. Toss Salad ingredients with 2 T. dressing. Divide dressed salad between two large dinner plates. Make a space in the center of the salads, remove shaped tortillas and spoon in filling. Place a filled tortilla in each space. Spoon 1/3 C. salsa over taco filling on each plate.
3. Divide seared veggies and avocado slices over the lettuce portion of the plate.

Top the salad with about 4 tsp. dollops of yogurt. Garnish with a grating of sharp cheddar cheese.

What I've Learned from this Recipe

Making your own taco filling is definitely the way to go. You'll end up with perfectly seasoned filling that's not too salty. The same will be true when making your own salsa.

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