Random Taco Cookbook



# Credits

* Taco image: https://unsplash.com/photos/lP5MCM6nZ5A/download
* Tacos from: https://taco-1150.herokuapp.com/random/?full\_taco=true
* Code by: Khalil

Quick and Dirty Spice Mix, Beet Salsa, Tomatoes (Traditional; US), Bulgar Black Bean Filling, Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

# Quick and Dirty Spice Mix

Quick and Dirty Spice Mix  
=========================  
  
I’m not going to make a lot of big assumptions here. You own a skillet of some sort. You have some jars of jankity-ass spices from who-knows-when. You want to eat some tacos within the next, like, fifteen minutes. I got you covered, bachelor(ette).  
  
\* 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour  
\* 2 1/2 tsp. chili powder  
\* 3/4 tsp. onion powder (or 1 1/2 tsp. minced yellow onion)  
\* 1 1/4 tsp. salt  
\* 1 tsp. paprika  
\* 3/4 tsp beef bouillon powder  
\* 1/4 tsp. granulated sugar  
\* 1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper  
\* 1/4 tsp. garlic powder  
\* 1 tsp. cumin  
  
Put all this in something with a lid, add 3/4 cup of water, and shake it. Brown a pound of ground beef, then pour the whole situation in there. Stir. Cook it down until it looks like you only put in half a cup of water. You have tacos now.  
  
Vegetarians  
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I’ve made this with that soy protein “ground beef” and it does not \_surprisingly\_ taste like someone put spices on a stack of cheap bar coasters and ran it all through a blender. (Vegetable) oil the skillet when you’re dealing with that stuff, unless you’re looking for excuses to buy a new one.  
  
If you leave out the bouillon for the sake of doing things vegan-style you’ll probably want to nudge up the salt a little.

# Beet Salsa

Beet Salsa  
==========  
  
Tired of plain ol' [Carne Asada Tacos](../base\_layers/chooped\_steak.md)? Get exotic with beet salsa.  
  
\* 4 - 6 Roma tomatoes  
\* 1 - 2 Serrano pepper  
\* Reasonably sized onion (green or vidalia)  
\* 10 garlic cloves (leave it up to your buds, I like 10 or more)  
\* Salt and pepper to taste  
\* 1 bunch of beets  
\* 1 or more lemons  
  
Fry tomatoes, pepper(s), onion and garlic in a pan until they are brown and tomato skins are peeling away. Move ingredients to the blender and purèe. Chop beets to a blendable size and add to salsa. Add salt and pepper to taste. Squeeze in desired amount of lemon and blend one more time.

# Tomatoes (Traditional; US)

Tomatoes (Traditional; US)  
======================  
  
Adding a bit of coolness and moisture, tomatoes are a staple ingredient of the American taco. The better the tomato the more flavor they will impart, but even a sub-sandard grocery store tomato has a place in a traditional taco.  
  
\* Tomatoes (diced)  
\* Cherry Tomatoes (quartered)  
\* Grape Tomatoes (sliced)

# Bulgar Black Bean Filling

Bulgar Black Bean Filling  
=========================  
  
This is a quick and easy vegetarian substitute for a ground beef-like texture without using a soy substitute.  
  
\* 1 cup cooked, strained bulgar  
\* 1/3 cup cooked black beans (or canned), rinsed and strained.  
  
Mix bulgar and black beans together. For better texture, slightly mash the black beans. Add your choice of seasonings to taste and serve.

# Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

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While they can certainly be made at home (if you have access to a deep-fryer), the best method of obtaining hard taco shells is to head to the grocery store.

Zaatar, Beet Salsa, Tomatoes (Traditional; US), Better Than Powder Groundbeef, Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

# Zaatar

Zaatar  
======  
  
\_A.k.a. za‘tar, za’atar, zattr, etc.\_  
  
Zaatar is a thyme-based Middle Eastern seasoning that adapts well to tacos. It has a pleasantly dry, faintly sour/bitter flavor. It goes well on savory bases like squash and lamb, and combines with other sour seasonings like lemon juice and radish.  
  
There are many kinds of zaatar, some quite different; this recipe is representative, not definitive.  
  
\* 4 units thyme  
\* 2 units oregano  
\* 2 units sesame seeds  
\* 0–1 unit salt  
\* 1 unit sumac (to be found at a Lebanese or Syrian market, or at a yuppie grocery; in a pinch, lemon zest can substitute)  
\* Other herbs to taste: fennel pollen, marjoram, cumin, etc.  
\* Optional: trace olive oil or lemon juice as a binder (but not if you plan to store it)  
  
Toast the sesame seeds. Grind all ingredients together using any method, stopping when the mixture is not too fine to pick up by pinching.  
  
May be added to meat during cooking, or sprinkled over a finshied taco.  
  
The latest theories have not ruled out the possibility of a zaatar mole.

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\* Grape Tomatoes (sliced)

# Better Than Powder Groundbeef

Did you grow up on Old El Paso ground beef taco seasonings?  
  
I'm sorry. So did I. They're terrible, right? Here's something better:  
  
Dice a half-onion, sautee and season liberally with salt, pepper, and ground cumin.  
  
Brown a pound of ground beef, seasoning liberally with ground cumin, salt, pepper. Add tabasco/other hot sauce if you like.  
  
When beef is browned, add a small jar of salsa (any kind! i like corn/black bean tomato salsa), and simmer for 5-10 minutes.  
  
Enjoy. Serve with crispy taco shells for nostalgia.

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Universal Taco Seasoning, Mango Lime Salsa, Green Chile Cabbage Salad, Baja Beer Battered Fish, Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

# Universal Taco Seasoning

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I got tired of buying packets of store-bought taco seasoning, so I experimented with various spices and ratios until I landed on this recipe. I keep a jar of it in the cupboard at all times.  
  
\* 6 tbsp chili powder  
\* 4 tbsp cumin  
\* 4 tbsp corn starch  
\* 3 tbsp onion powder  
\* 1 tbsp salt  
\* 1 tbsp garlic powder  
\* 4 tsp oregano (Mexican oregano, if you've got it)  
\* 2 tsp crushed red pepper  
  
Combine in Mason jar and shake well to combine.  
  
This mix works well for chicken, pork and beef, destined for the grill, oven, slow cooker or stovetop. You could tweak it a bit to target a specific meat, but I like to have a base, universal mix around. Makes it super easy to turn leftover anything into delicious taco filling: Just chop up whatever it is, toss it into a skillet, sprinkle generously with seasoning, then add a bit of water and simmer to impart flavor.

# Mango Lime Salsa

Mango Lime Salsa  
======================  
  
This fresh mango salsa is sweet, tangy, and simple. It pairs exceedingly well with Garlic Lime Sauce for delicious fish tacos. The recipe is a simplified version of the [mango salsa](http://www.loveandoliveoil.com/2008/04/fish-tacos-with-mango-salsa.html) on Love and Oil.  
  
In a bowl, combine:  
\* 2 ripe fresh mangoes, chopped   
\* 1/2 cup diced sweet onion  
\* 1-2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro  
\* Juice of 1 fresh lime  
\* (optional): 1/2 fresh jalapeno, diced  
  
Stir and serve.

# Green Chile Cabbage Salad

### Green Chile Cabbage Salad with Seared Corn  
This isn't a tradition, or even particularly traditional -- except in my apartment in Oakland, where I make this for myself ever time I make pork tacos.  
  
#### Ingredients  
\* 1 green cabbage  
\* 4 limes  
\* 2 ears corn, or roughly two cups of corn kernels (adjust to desired corn-y-ness)  
\* Dried, Powdered New Mexico Green Chile, to taste  
\* Salt, to taste  
\* Olive oil  
\* Optional: some crumbled cotija or queso Oaxaqueno  
  
#### Directions  
1. If using ears of corn, strip the kernels from them with a sharp knife.  
2. Heat a few tablespoons of oil over high heat. I like to use a Dutch Oven for this, but the main cookware properties you want are heavy-bottomed and wide.  
3. Toss the corn kernels in to the oil, spread them evenly, salt very lightly and let them ride. I \_highly\_ recommend a splatter guard for this step, but \*\*not\*\* a lid. You want the corn to dry out just a little and get a good sear. It's done when it's starting to get dark, a little chewy, and probably is sticking to the pan.  
4. While the corn is going, core and chop the cabbage in to wide strips.  
5. How's the corn doing?  
6. Juice the limes.  
7. How's the corn doing? If it's not done yet, grab a beer and hang out 'til it is.  
8. The corn is done? Great. Toss it on top of the cabbage. Add a little salt, then a good hit of olive oil, then half-or-so of the lime juice. Toss in a good tablespoon or two of the green chile powder. Start stirring.  
9. You want everything coated nicely, but I don't like the salad too oily, so go easy on that. I add lime until the sour balances the sweet of the corn. I add green chile slowly -- it takes a second to rehydrate and get hot. I might add as much as a half cup of the stuff to a salad for myself or spicy food fans like me; I go easier on the spice-unenthused.  
10. Serve it! If you're in to tossing a little cheese on there, do it -- but I usually just eat it straight. Sometimes this goes on fish or chicken tacos; sometimes it's a side to richer pork tacos. It's always awesome.  
  
\*\*Note on ingredients\*\*: green chile is the gastronomical life blood of New Mexican cuisine, but it's little known in the other 49 states. I like a brand called [\_Los Chileros de Nuevo Mexico\_](http://www.loschileros.com/), which I can find sometimes in tiendas and other times at Whole Foods (go figure). The trick here is this: just don't accept substitutes. It's not the same. I've also had to accept that fresh chile is just not what this salad needs, so don't do that either (it doesn't distribute well enough across the cabbage). Do have this with cold, crisp beer.

# Baja Beer Battered Fish

Baja Beer Battered Fish  
========================  
  
This is the beer battered fish for [Baja fish tacos](../full\_tacos/baja\_fish\_tacos.md).  
  
Batter  
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\* 1/2 c flour  
\* 1/4 c baking powder  
\* 1 egg  
\* 1/2 c beer (Tecate!)  
\* 1 tsp salt  
\* 1 tsp chili powder (paprika, salt, garlic salt)  
\* 2 tsp parsley  
  
Beat the eggs and fold all batter ingredients until smooth.  
Add flour to make it thicker or add beer to make it thinner.  
If you have time let the batter chill for a couple hours.  
  
Fish  
------  
  
\* 1 lb. cod fillet, grouper, or similar white fish, the fresher the better  
  
\* Cut fish into small chunks.  
\* Fill a pan with oil and heat until approx. 375 F.  
\* Fill a bowl with about a cup of flour and keep it next to the batter bowl.  
\* Dip a fish piece into flour then into the batter.  
\* Fry for 4-5 minutes, turning halfway through. Drain on a paper towel.

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Universal Taco Seasoning, Cranberry Salsa, Corn Salad, Moroccan Lamb, Fresh Corn Tortillas

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\* 4 tsp oregano (Mexican oregano, if you've got it)  
\* 2 tsp crushed red pepper  
  
Combine in Mason jar and shake well to combine.  
  
This mix works well for chicken, pork and beef, destined for the grill, oven, slow cooker or stovetop. You could tweak it a bit to target a specific meat, but I like to have a base, universal mix around. Makes it super easy to turn leftover anything into delicious taco filling: Just chop up whatever it is, toss it into a skillet, sprinkle generously with seasoning, then add a bit of water and simmer to impart flavor.

# Cranberry Salsa

Cranberry Salsa  
===============  
  
Ingredients  
------------  
\* 1 bag cranberries  
\* 1 cup water  
\* 3/4 cup sugar  
\* half a small white onion (chopped)  
\* 1 jalepeño, chopped small (remove seeds & wash for less heat)  
\* 1 bunch cilantro (cut up)  
\* 1 lime  
  
Directions  
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1. In a saucepan, get your water and sugar boiling, then add the cranberries. Boil until the cranberries pop (5-10 minutes), then take off heat, drain, and cool. They'll be slightly jelly-like, but you don't want them to disintegrate entirely, so watch them closely.   
  
2. While the cranberries are cooling, chop your white onion, your jalepeño and cilantro.   
  
3. Once your berries are cool, they'll probably have turned gooey. If there is still a bunch of water, drain it. But it's probably turned to jelly.   
  
4. Combine everything, and give a good squeeze of lime over the whole thing. As you combine, you'll notice that the cranberries just give up their shape entirely. Also: Don't wear your finest clothing when you do this--this shit \_stains\_.  
  
5. Make adjustments based on taste here. Your main variables are:  
 \* Sweet vs tangy. Default right now is tangy. Add more sugar for sweet.  
 \* Battling the overwhelmingness of the cranberries. You've got two things going with the cranberries here: flavor and texture. More onion will add more crunch to the whole thing, and help boost up the salsa-ness. Jalepeño is your heat adjustment--seeds are your friend. But the Cilantro is your big mover here: it helps to round out the sharpness of the cranberry. Lime also helps bring down the cranberry overload.  
   
  
Orange Cranberry Salsa Holographic Varient Cover  
------------------------------------------------  
  
\* Go with half a cup of OJ and half a cup of water to boil your berries in.  
\* Compliment the lime juice with a fresh squeezed orange and then \*zest\* that motherfucker right into the salsa

# Corn Salad

Corn Salad  
==========  
  
\* 2 Ears of corn  
\* 1 Lime, juiced  
\* Small handful of Cilantro, chopped  
\* A few green onions, chopped  
\* Garlic salt, or Garlic AND salt. I use Trader Joe's Garlic Salt in the grinder usually.   
  
Cut the corn off of the cob, and in a mixing bowl mix together corn, lime juice, chopped cilantro and garlic salt. You can tweak any of this stuff as desired.  
  
---  
This is my first Github commit. I'm glad it's taco related.

# Moroccan Lamb

Moroccan Lamb  
=============  
  
A Differently Spiced Meat Than Your Usual Taco  
----------------------------------------------  
  
\* 500 g ground lamb  
\* 20 g Ras al Hanout spice. My mix contains:  
 \* Paprika  
 \* Cinnamon  
 \* Allspice  
 \* Clove  
 \* Toasted Mustard  
 \* Cumin  
 \* Caraway  
 \* Black Pepper  
\* 10 g fresh lemon zest or 10 g finely ground Black Lemon Omani (Moroccoan dried preserved lemon)  
  
Mix together and brown.

# Fresh Corn Tortillas

Fresh Corn Tortillas  
===================  
  
This is the only way to go. So worth it. Makes roughly 15 tortillas.  
  
\* 1 3/4 cups masa harina  
\* 1 1/8 cups water  
  
1. In a medium bowl, mix together masa harina and hot water until thoroughly combined. Turn dough onto a clean surface and knead until pliable and smooth. If dough is too sticky, add more masa harina; if it begins to dry out, sprinkle with water. Cover dough tightly with plastic wrap and allow to stand for 30 minutes.  
2. Preheat a cast iron skillet or griddle to medium-high.  
3. Divide dough into 15 equal-size balls. Using a tortilla press, a rolling pin, press each ball of dough flat between two sheets of wax paper.  
4. Place tortilla in preheated pan and allow to cook for approximately 30 seconds, or until browned and slightly puffy. Turn tortilla over to brown on second side for approximately 30 seconds more, then transfer to a plate. Repeat process with each ball of dough. Keep tortillas covered with a towel to stay warm and moist (or a low temp oven) until ready to serve.

Packaged Seasonings, Salsa de chile de árbol, Green Chile Cabbage Salad, Lightly Seasoned Beef, Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

# Packaged Seasonings

Packaged Seasonings  
==============  
  
Lest we be accused of snobbery, let's acknowledge that a taco is a taco, and taco night can be well-served by not having to think at all.  
  
Feel free to use the pre-packaged seasoning of your choice. When I'm in an old-school mood, I head straight for...  
  
\* Old El Paso Taco Seasoning

# Salsa de chile de árbol

Salsa de chile de árbol  
=======================  
  
This is a go-to taco sauce in western Mexico and probably elsewhere. You can  
mix and match the techniques in the two variants presented here, and substituting  
or adding chiles is a ramp onto the combinatorial superhighway of Mexican food and  
can demystify the salsa bar at the local taquería.  
  
# Red  
  
\* dried whole \*chiles de árbol\*  
\* tomatoes  
\* onion  
\* \*optionally\*, garlic  
  
Take between .3 and 1 chiles per tomato, remove the stems and put them in a  
saucepan with a tablespoon or two of oil (olive, soy, etc.) The pan and oil should be very  
hot and the chiles should seem to be at risk of burning. Rotate the  
chiles around and let them get dark brown to black without actually burning them —  
this can happen quickly, which is good because your eyes, nose, and lungs  
may reach their maximum vaporized chile tolerance during this step.  
  
Add a bunch of chopped onion and garlic and lower the heat. Cut the tomatoes  
in half and throw them in with salt to taste. Cook until the tomatoes look stewed.  
If you have one of those blender wands that you can put directly in a saucepan,  
you can blend everything now (you may end up making this sauce frequently enough  
to justify the purchase of a blender wand.) Otherwise wait until the mixture  
is not hot and blend it in a standard blender.  
  
# Green  
  
\* dried whole \*chiles de árbol\*  
\* green tomatillos  
\* onion  
\* cilantro  
  
Take between .1 and .5 chiles per tomatillo, remove the stems and put them in a bare, hot saucepan.  
Toast the chiles without oil until they are dark. Add halved or quartered tomatillos, salt, and a  
tablespoon or two of water to prevent burning the chiles before the tomatillos release  
their juices. When the mixture has cooked for as long as you can stand to wait, remove  
the heat and let it cool. Blend and place in a little salsa bowl and heap with finely  
chopped onion and cilantro.  
  
One non-obvious little point is that skipping the oil in the chile roasting-toasting  
step seems to increase the spiciness of the final product.

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# Lightly Seasoned Beef

Lightly Seasoned Beef  
=====================  
  
\* 500 g ground beef or chopped steak  
\* 20 g black cumin seed, ground  
\* 2 cloves garlic  
\* 15 ml white wine  
\* 4 g salt if wine is unsalted  
\* oil to coat the pan  
  
1. Heat oil in the pan.  
2. Toss in the garlic, and the beef on top of that.  
3. Add the cumin. Brown the beef.  
4. Use the splash of wine to loosen anything stuck to the pan.  
  
Perfect, lightly seasoned taco meat.

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