Random Taco Cookbook



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• Code by Andrea Pratt

# Chorizo with Zaatar, Sweet Potato and Apple Hash and Baja White Sauce in Fresh Corn Tortillas

#### Chorizo

Chorizo  
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\_Adapted from [Aredridel's Lightly Seasoned Beef](aredridel\_lightly\_seasoned\_beef.md)\_  
  
\* 20 oz chorizo  
\* 20 g black cumin seed, ground  
\* 2 cloves garlic  
\* 15 ml white wine  
\* 4 g salt if wine is unsalted  
\* 1/2 small white onion, diced  
\* Oil to coat the pan  
  
\_\_Directions\_\_  
  
1. Heat oil in the pan.  
2. Add in onions, stirring occasionally until onions become translucent.  
3. Toss in the garlic, and the chorizo on top of that.  
4. Add the cumin. Brown the chorizo.  
5. Use the splash of wine to loosen anything stuck to the pan.  
  
Perfect, lightly seasoned taco meat.

#### Zaatar

Zaatar  
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\_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.

#### Sweet Potato and Apple Hash

Sweet Potato and Apple Hash  
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Sweet potatoes are my go-to taco punch-up. I was going my normal route of making small (1/4" or so) cubes of sweet potatoes when I thought: Hey, it's fall, I'm going to add an apple in there. Fuck yes.  
  
\* 2 Small sweet potatoes (you'd be amazed how little sweet potato you need for tacos)  
\* 1 Small apple  
\* One can diced green chilis  
\* A couple pinches of chili powder  
\* A queeze of honey  
\* Pat o' butter  
  
Mix this all into a pan, with about 1/4 cup of water, and boil it all up until the water goes away, toss in the butter, and continue to pan-fry until things get a little browned.

#### Baja White Sauce

Baja White Sauce  
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This is a traditional white sauce for [Baja fish tacos](../full\_tacos/baja\_fish\_tacos.md).  
  
\* 1/4 cup mayo  
\* 2 tbsp sour cream  
\* 1 tbsp lime juice  
\* 1/4 tsp celery salt (or garlic salt, etc)  
  
Mix, and refrigerate for an hour if possible.

#### Fresh Corn Tortillas

Fresh Corn Tortillas  
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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.

# Ground Beef (Traditional; US) with Universal Taco Seasoning, Tomatoes (Traditional; US) and Salsa de chile de árbol in Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

#### Ground Beef (Traditional; US)

Ground Beef (Traditional; US)  
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The tranditional base for an American taco is ground beef, browsed in a skillet and seasoned.  
  
\* 1lb Ground Beef  
  
1. Heat a skillet on the stovetop.  
2. Brown the ground beef for 8-10 minutes, or until it is thoroughly cooked, stirring frequently to avoid sticking or burning. (If you're not using a non-stick pan, which is preferred, use 1T oil to keep things loose.)  
3. Stir in seasonings.

#### Universal Taco Seasoning

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.

#### Tomatoes (Traditional; US)

Tomatoes (Traditional; US)  
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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)

#### Salsa de chile de árbol

Salsa de chile de árbol  
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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.

#### Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)  
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Mistakenly thought by many to be traditionally Mexican, hard shells were actually popularized in the US in the mid-20th century.  
  
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.

# Baked Tilapia with Packaged Seasonings, Drunken Green Beans and Chipotlé Sauce in Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

#### Baked Tilapia

Baked Tilapia  
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Oven fried fish for when you think you want to pretend you're eating healthier.  
  
\* 1 pound mild fish (I usually use tilapia)  
\* 1 cup masa  
\* 2 tsp salt  
\* 1/2 to 1 tsp cayenne  
\* 2 tsp paprika  
\* 2 tsps chili powder  
\* 2 tsps garlic powder  
\* 1/2 to 1 tsp black pepper (to taste)  
\* olive oil  
  
  
1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.  
2. Mix dry ingredients in a bowl to make the coating for the fish.  
3. Cut fish into slices or chunks, as your taste desires.   
4. Drizzle olive oil over cut fish, and dip fish into breading.  
5. Bake for 8ish minutes and finish, if you can, under the broiler.

#### 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

#### Drunken Green Beans

Drunken Green Beans  
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Green beans are fine. Green beans cooked in beer are better. Maybe even the best.  
  
\* 1 Surly fist full of green beans  
\* half a beer  
\* quarter cup vegetable broth  
\* 2 cloves garlic  
\* 1 Tbsp olive oil  
\* some salt, whatever  
  
First peel and dice the garlic and sauté it in the olive oil. Before it gets all burned and ruined, add the beer and vegetable broth.   
   
As the liquid comes to a boil, cut the green beans up. Add the green beans and a pinch of salt and let them simmer for about five minutes. If you like your beans on the softer side you can let it go a little longer. But the trick is to pull them right after the color starts to turn and you've just made a delicious addition to any taco.

#### Chipotlé Sauce

Chipotlé Sauce  
==============  
  
\_\_Ingredients\_\_  
  
\* 1 cup plain Greek yogurt  
\* Juice from 2 limes  
\* 2-3 chipotlé peppers, with surrounding adobo sauce from can  
  
\_\_Directions\_\_  
  
1. Drop all of this into a food processor, and blend away.  
2. Let sit in fridge for 30 minutes or overnight for flavor melding.   
3. Add to tacos, and anything else you'd like.

#### Hard Corn Shells (Traditional; US)

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