

# The Best Carne Asada Recipe

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We can all agree on a few things here: Great *carne asada* should taste, first, of the beef. It should be buttery, rich, and juicy, with a nice charred, smoky flavor from the grill or broiler. It should also be tender enough that you can eat it in a taco or burrito, but substantial enough to be served as a steak and eaten with a knife and fork. Finally, the marinade should have a good balance of flavors, with no single ingredient overwhelming any other. This recipe produces the carne asada of my childhood dreams.



## Why It Works

- Whole chilies produce better flavor than powdered chilies.
- A variety of meatiness-enhancing aromatics improves the beef flavor.
- Pulling the steak early for carryover cooking ensures an evenly cooked steak.

**YIELD:** Seves 6

**ACTIVE TIME:** 1 hour

**TOTAL TIME:** 4 to 13 hours

## Ingredients

3 whole dried ancho chilies,  
stems and seeds removed  
(see note)

3 whole dried guajillo chilies,  
stems and seeds removed  
(see note)

2 whole chipotle peppers,  
canned in adobo

3/4 cup fresh juice from 2 to 3  
oranges, preferably sour  
oranges

2 tablespoons fresh juice from  
2 to 3 limes

2 tablespoons extra-virgin  
olive oil

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons Asian fish  
sauce, such as [Red Boat](#)

## Directions

1. Place dried ancho and guajillo chilies on a microwave-safe plate and microwave until pliable and toasty-smelling, 10 to 20 seconds. Transfer to the jar of a blender and add chipotle peppers, orange juice, lime juice, olive oil, soy sauce, fish sauce, garlic, cilantro, cumin seed, coriander seed, and brown sugar. Blend until a smooth sauce has formed, about 1 minute. Season to taste with salt. Transfer half of the salsa to a large bowl and the other half to a sealed container. Set aside the sealed container in the refrigerator.
2. Add an extra 2 teaspoons of salt to the salsa in the bowl. It should taste slightly saltier than is comfortable to taste. Add 1 piece of steak to bowl and turn to coat. Transfer to a gallon-sized zipper-lock bag with the top folded over to prevent excess sauce and meat juices from contaminating the seal. Repeat with remaining steak, adding it all to the same bag. Pour any excess marinade over the steak. Squeeze all air out of the bag and seal. Refrigerate for at least 3 hours and up to overnight.
3. When ready to cook, remove the extra salsa from the fridge to allow it to warm up a little. Light one chimney full of charcoal. When all the charcoal is lit and covered with gray ash, pour out and arrange the coals on one side of the charcoal grate. Set cooking grate in place,

6 medium cloves garlic

1 small bunch cilantro, leaves  
and tender stems only, divided

1 tablespoon whole cumin  
seed, toasted and ground

1 teaspoon whole coriander  
seed, toasted and ground

2 tablespoons dark brown  
sugar

Kosher salt

2 pounds skirt steak (2 to 3  
whole skirt steaks), trimmed  
and cut with the grain into 5-  
to 6-inch lengths (see note)

Warm corn or flour tortillas,  
lime wedges, diced onion,  
fresh cilantro, and avocado,  
for serving

cover grill, and allow to preheat for 5 minutes. Alternatively, set half the burners on a gas grill to the highest heat setting, cover, and preheat for 10 minutes. Clean and oil the grilling grate.

4. Remove steak from marinade and wipe off excess. Place directly over the hot side of the grill. If using a gas grill, cover; if using a charcoal grill, leave exposed. Cook, turning occasionally, until steak is well charred on outside and center registers 110°F on an instant-read thermometer, 5 to 10 minutes total. Transfer to a cutting board and allow to rest for 5 minutes. Slice thinly against the grain and serve immediately, passing extra salsa, lime wedges, avocado, onions, cilantro, and tortillas on the side.

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## Special Equipment

Blender, grill, instant-read thermometer

## Notes

I like ancho and *guajillo* chilies here, but a mix of chilies such as *negro*, *pasilla*, and California can be used in their place. An equivalent weight of hanger or flap steak can be used in place of skirt steak.