Random Taco Cookbook



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Code By: Laura Pankow

Bulgar Black Bean Filling with Drunken Green Beans and Pickled Vegetables

# 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.

# Pickled Vegetables

Pickled Vegetables  
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\_\_Whisk:\_\_  
  
\* 1/4 cup rice vinegar  
\* 2 teaspoons sugar  
\* 1 teaspoon soy sauce  
\* 1 teaspoon fish sauce  
\* Some red pepper flakes  
  
\_\_Then toss in some sliced vegetables. Suggestions include:\_\_  
  
\* cucumbers  
\* carrots  
\* onions  
\* radishes  
  
Mix, cover and chill in fridge for at least 30 minutes before using.

# 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.

# Bulgar Black Bean Filling

Bulgar Black Bean Filling  
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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.

# 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.

Lightly Seasoned Beef with Veggies for Fish Tacos and Phoning it in Pico de Gallo

# 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.

# Phoning it in Pico de Gallo

Phoning it in Pico de Gallo  
===========================  
  
\_Super Quick & Easy Pico\_  
  
  
\* 1 pint grape tomatoes, quartered (make your kids do this part)  
\* 3 tablespoons finely chopped white onion  
\* Coarse salt  
\* Squeeze of lime  
\* As many finely chopped red (or green) jalapeños as you want (optional)  
  
Combine the tomatoes, cilantro and onion together in a bowl. Season to taste with salt and lime.  
  
Reserve some of this mixture for kids, and then add as much jalapeño as you like to the remaining mixture for the non wimps.

# Veggies for Fish Tacos

Veggies for Fish Tacos  
======================  
  
Fish tacos are a special breed, requiring different vegetable options.  
  
\_\_Assemble your veg from the following options:\_\_  
  
\* Cabbage, purple, shredded  
\* Cabbage, other shades, shredded  
\* Radishes, sliced into thin slices  
\* Red peppers, diced  
\* Cherry tomatoes, sliced (if you're a heathen)  
\* Cilantro, if it doesn't taste like soap to you  
  
And one requirement:  
\* Limes, sliced for juicing over tacos.  
  
Place out your selections and assemble into your taco. Then squeeze a lime over the top.

# 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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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.

Baked Tilapia with Traditional Taco Mixins and Guacamole (Simple)

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# Guacamole (Simple)

Guacamole (Simple)  
=========  
  
If you're not in the mood to be fussy, this could be considered a minimum-viable guacamole recipe.  
  
\* 2 ripe avocados  
\* 2-4 limes, depending on juiciness, delivering 2-4T of lime juice  
\* 1 diced tomato (seeded if it's a big one)  
\* salt (to taste)  
\* hot sauce (to taste; Frank's Red Hot is a standard, but go with what you like)  
  
1. Scoop the avocado meat into a bowl and mash them with a fork. Leave it a bit lumpy as we will do more stirring in a bit and we don't want to over-work them.  
2. Add the chopped tomato.  
3. Add the lime juice; hold some back for later adjustment).  
4. Add ½t salt.  
5. Add 2T hot sauce.  
6. Stir with the fork again.  
7. Taste.  
8. Adjust salt/lime/hot sauce as desired.  
  
This recipe will support one average-size bag of chips, so adjust quantities based on expectations.

# Traditional Taco Mixins

Traditional Taco Mixins  
(makes about 20 servings)  
  
- 1 (16 ounce) container sour cream  
- 1/4 head iceberg lettuce (rinsed, dried, shredded)  
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese  
- 3 diced tomatoes  
- 1 (2.25 ounce) can black olives, drained  
  
Add ingredients to tacos in layers.

# Baked Tilapia

Baked Tilapia  
=============  
  
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.

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