



Crispy Tacos (Tacos Dorados)

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Commercial taco kits are convenient, but the seasoning packets taste dusty and flat and the shells are short on flavor and prone to cracking. Frying your own shells results in great taste and texture, but the process is tedious and messy. Instead, we made tacos dorados, a Mexican preparation in which corn tortillas are stuffed with a beef filling before being folded in half and fried. The tacos are then opened like books and loaded with garnishes. We first tossed ground beef with a bit of baking soda to help it stay juicy before adding it to a savory base of sautéed onion, spices, and tomato paste. Next, we stirred in some shredded cheese to make the filling more cohesive. To build the tacos, we brushed corn tortillas with oil, warmed them in the oven to make them pliable, and stuffed them with the filling. Finally, we pan-fried the tacos in two batches until they were supercrispy and golden.

INGREDIENTS	INSTRUCTIONS	SERVES 4
<div><div>1</div>tablespoon water</div> <div><div>¼</div>teaspoon baking soda</div> <div><div>12</div>ounces 90 percent lean ground beef</div> <div><div>7</div>tablespoons vegetable oil</div> <div><div>1</div>onion, chopped fine</div>	<p>Arrange the tacos so they face the same direction in the skillet to make them easy to fit and flip. To ensure crispy tacos, cook the tortillas until they are deeply browned. To garnish, open each taco like a book and load it with your preferred toppings; close it to eat.</p> <p>1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Combine water and baking soda in large bowl. Add</p>	

- 1 ½** tablespoons chili powder
- 1 ½** tablespoons paprika
- 1 ½** teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 ½** teaspoons garlic powder
- Salt
- 2** tablespoons tomato paste
- 2** ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (1/2 cup), plus extra for serving
- 12** (6-inch) corn tortillas
- Shredded iceberg lettuce
- Chopped tomato
- Sour cream
- pickled jalapeño slices
- Hot sauce

beef and mix until thoroughly combined. Set aside.

2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 4 to 6 minutes. Add chili powder, paprika, cumin, garlic powder, and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in tomato paste and cook until paste is rust-colored, 1 to 2 minutes. Add beef mixture and cook, using wooden spoon to break meat into pieces no larger than ¼ inch, until beef is no longer pink, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer beef mixture to bowl; stir in cheddar until cheese has melted and mixture is homogeneous. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels.

3. Thoroughly brush both sides of tortillas with 2 tablespoons oil. Arrange tortillas, overlapping, on rimmed baking sheet in 2 rows (6 tortillas each). Bake until tortillas are warm and pliable, about 5 minutes. Remove tortillas from oven and reduce oven temperature to 200 degrees.

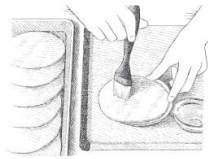
4. Place 2 tablespoons filling on 1 side of 1 tortilla. Fold and press to close tortilla (edges will be open, but tortilla will remain folded). Repeat with remaining tortillas and remaining filling. (At this point, filled tortillas can be covered and refrigerated for up to 12 hours.)

5. Set wire rack in second rimmed baking sheet and line rack with double layer of paper towels. Heat remaining ¼ cup oil in now-empty skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Arrange 6 tacos in skillet with open sides facing away from you. Cook, adjusting heat so oil actively sizzles and bubbles appear around edges of tacos, until tacos are crispy and deeply browned on 1 side, 2 to 3 minutes. Using tongs and thin spatula, carefully flip tacos. Cook until deeply browned on second side, 2 to 3 minutes, adjusting heat as necessary.

6. Remove skillet from heat and transfer tacos to prepared wire rack. Blot tops of tacos with double layer of paper towels. Place sheet with fried tacos in oven to keep warm. Return skillet to medium-high heat and cook remaining tacos. Serve tacos immediately, passing extra cheddar, lettuce, tomato, sour cream, jalapeños, and hot sauce separately.

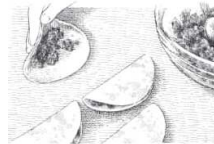
A New Way to Make Tacos

A few changes to the usual routine result in the crispiest, tastiest tacos around.



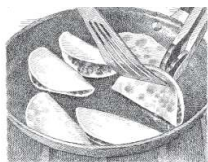
DUMP STORE-BOUGHT OR DEEP-FRIED SHELLS

Brush the corn tortillas with oil; bake until pliable enough to stuff.



FILL 'EM FIRST

Stuff the warmed tortillas with savory ground beef bound together with melted cheddar cheese.



SHALLOW-FRY IN MINIMAL OIL

Fry the tacos in two batches until crispy. (Only $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of oil is needed for 12 tacos.)