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## Grilled Fish Tacos

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Favorite Ways with the Catch of the Day

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

For a fish taco with fresh, bold flavors, we looked to the Yucatán Peninsula and the Pacific Coast for inspiration and fired up the grill. For simplicity we opted for skinless fillets instead of the traditional whole butterflied fish, and meaty swordfish held up better on the grill than flaky options like snapper and cod. Citrus-heavy marinades added little flavor and caused the fish to stick to the grill grate. A thick paste featuring ancho and chipotle chile powders, oregano, coriander, and just enough citrus juice to make it spreadable worked much better, developing deep, flavorful charring on the grill without promoting sticking. Refreshing grilled pineapple salsa, avocado, and crunchy iceberg lettuce completed our perfect grilled swordfish tacos.

### Serves 6

Mahi-mahi, tuna, and halibut fillets are all suitable substitutes for the swordfish, but to ensure the best results buy 1-inch-thick fillets and cut them in a similar fashion to the swordfish.

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon ancho chile powder
- 2 teaspoons chipotle chile powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Salt
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 6 tablespoons lime juice (3 limes)
- 2 pounds skinless swordfish steaks, 1 inch thick, cut lengthwise into 1-inch-wide strips
- 1 pineapple, peeled, quartered lengthwise, cored, and each quarter halved lengthwise
- 1 jalapeño chile
- 18 (6-inch) corn tortillas
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro, plus extra for serving
- 1/2 head iceberg lettuce (4 1/2 ounces), cored and thinly sliced

- 1 ~~1 medium~~ jalapeño, seeded, pitted, and sliced thin

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat 2 tablespoons oil, ancho chile powder, and chipotle chile powder in 8-inch skillet over medium heat, stirring constantly, until fragrant and some bubbles form, 2 to 3 minutes. Add oregano, coriander, garlic, and 1 teaspoon salt and continue to cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds longer. Add tomato paste and, using spatula, mash tomato paste with spice mixture until combined, about 20 seconds. Stir in orange juice and 2 tablespoons lime juice. Cook, stirring constantly, until thoroughly mixed and reduced slightly, about 2 minutes. Transfer chile mixture to large bowl and let cool for 15 minutes.
2. Add swordfish to bowl with chile mixture, and stir gently with rubber spatula to coat fish. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.
- 3A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL:** Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter mounded with charcoal briquettes (7 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.
- 3B. FOR A GAS GRILL:** Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Turn all burners to medium-high.
4. Clean cooking grate, then repeatedly brush grate with well-oiled paper towels until grate is black and glossy, 5 to 10 times. Brush both sides of pineapple with remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Place fish on half of grill. Place pineapple and jalapeño on other half. Cover and cook until fish, pineapple, and jalapeño have begun to brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Using thin spatula, flip fish, pineapple, and jalapeño over. Cover and continue to cook until second sides of pineapple and jalapeño are browned and swordfish registers 140 degrees, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer fish to large platter, flake into pieces, and tent with aluminum foil. Transfer pineapple and jalapeño to cutting board.
5. Clean cooking grate. Place half of tortillas on grill. Grill until softened and speckled with brown spots, 30 to 45 seconds per side. Wrap tortillas in dish towel or foil to keep warm. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
6. When cool enough to handle, finely chop pineapple and jalapeño. Transfer to medium bowl and stir in bell pepper, cilantro, and remaining 4 tablespoons lime juice. Season with salt to taste. Top tortillas with flaked fish, salsa, lettuce, and avocado. Serve with lime wedges and extra cilantro.

## TECHNIQUE

### DON'T FLAKE OUT

When grilling fish, avoid flaky varieties like grouper, hake, cod, or snapper, which will stick to the grill and fall apart when you try to flip them.

**SHREDDED SNAPPER:** For fillets that stay intact, choose a denser variety like swordfish, mahi-mahi, tuna, or halibut.



## TECHNIQUE

## Key Steps: Grilled Fish Tacos That Taste Light But Not Lean

For grilled fish that's infused with flavor, it wasn't enough to simply create nice char marks. We also boosted flavor with a bold spice paste and a grilled-fruit salsa.



**MAKE PASTE:** A thick spice paste, brightened by lime and orange juices, adds complexity to the fish.

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**CHILL FISH:** Refrigerating the paste-covered fish for at least 30 minutes allows the salt in the paste to penetrate and season the fish.

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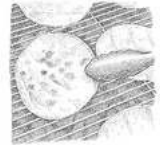
**GRILL FISH, FRUIT, AND JALAPEÑO:** The grill deepens the flavor of the pineapple and chile destined for the salsa.

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**WARM TORTILLAS:** Grill the tortillas for about 30 seconds per side and then wrap them in a dish towel or foil to keep them warm.

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**FINISH SALSA:** Finely chop the pineapple and jalapeño and then combine them with red bell pepper, cilantro, and lime juice.

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