

Citrus-Braised Pork Tacos

Traditional cochinita pibil takes two days and visits to three specialty stores. Unbelievably good, yes, but there had to be an easier way.

BY MORGAN BOLLING



Our slightly sweet, superspicy habanero sauce gets its vibrant orange color from an unexpected ingredient: carrot.

CITRUS-BRAISED PORK TACOS

Serves 6

Pork butt roast is often labeled Boston butt in the supermarket. For a spicier sauce, add an extra habanero or two; if you are spice-averse, substitute less-spicy jalapeños for the habaneros.

PORK

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅓ cup tomato paste
- 1½ cups water
- ¼ cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
- 3 tablespoons distilled white vinegar
- 1½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 5 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper
- 1 (2½- to 3-pound) boneless pork butt roast, trimmed and cut into 1-inch chunks

PICKLED RED ONIONS

- 1 red onion, halved and sliced thin
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt

HABANERO SAUCE

- 1 cup water
- 1 carrot, peeled and chopped
- 1 vine-ripened tomato, cored and chopped

- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ½ habanero chile, stemmed
- 1 garlic clove, smashed and peeled
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons lime juice, plus lime wedges for serving

18 (6-inch) corn tortillas, warmed

1. FOR THE PORK: Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook until lightly browned, 4 to 6 minutes.

2. Add garlic, cumin, oregano, allspice, and cinnamon and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until paste begins to darken, about 45 seconds. Stir in water, orange juice concentrate, 2 tablespoons vinegar, Worcestershire, bay leaves, 2 teaspoons salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper, scraping up any browned bits.

3. Add pork and bring to boil. Transfer to oven, uncovered, and cook until pork is tender, about 2 hours, stirring once halfway through cooking.

4. FOR THE PICKLED RED ONIONS: Meanwhile, place onion in medium bowl. Bring vinegar, sugar, and salt to simmer in small saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves. Pour over onions and cover loosely. Let onions cool completely, about 30 minutes. (Onions can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.)

5. FOR THE HABANERO SAUCE:

Combine water, carrot, tomato, onion, habanero, garlic, and ½ teaspoon salt in now-empty saucepan. Bring to boil over medium heat and cook until carrot is tender, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let carrot mixture cool slightly, about 5 minutes. Transfer carrot mixture to blender, add vinegar and lime juice, and process until sauce is smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste; set aside. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.)

6. Transfer pot to stovetop; discard bay leaves. Using potato masher, mash pork until finely shredded. Bring to simmer over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to medium-low and cook until most of liquid has evaporated, 3 to 5 minutes.

7. Off heat, stir in remaining 1 tablespoon vinegar and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve on tortillas with pickled red onions, habanero sauce, and lime wedges.

TEST KITCHEN TIP

Safely Handling Habaneros

Take our word for it: Don't handle habaneros with your bare hands. The capsaicin levels are so high that they can irritate your skin (or worse, your eyes). To protect yourself, wear disposable latex gloves. In a pinch, zipper-lock bags can serve as makeshift gloves.