



NAVAJO TACOS WITH SANTA FE SAUCE

SERVINGS: 4 ACTIVE TIME: 1 hr TOTAL TIME: 90 mins

Navajo Tacos are a cultural and geographical hodgepodge of flavors and ingredients, drawing from the cuisines of Mexico, the Navajo and the American Southwest. Instead of tortillas, these tacos are made with Navajo fry bread and are topped with slices of grilled lamb and Santa Fe sauce, a take on the classic red chile sauce that is popular across New Mexico.

Ingredients

For the Fry Bread

- > 2 cups all-purpose flour
- > 1 tablespoon baking powder
- > 1 teaspoon salt
- > 3/4 cup whole milk
- > 1 tablespoon olive oil
- > 3 cups frying oil

For the Lamb & Fillings

- > 1 lb boneless lamb steak
- > 1 tablespoon cumin
- > 1 tablespoon chili powder
- > 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- > 3 tablespoons olive oil
- > 1 teaspoon salt
- > 1 red onion
- > 1 large bell pepper
- > 2 cups arugula

For the Santa Fe Sauce

- > 6 New Mexico chiles
- > 2 cups boiling water
- > 2 cloves garlic
- > 1 shallot
- > 1 teaspoon cumin
- > 1 teaspoon oregano
- > 1 teaspoon salt
- > 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- > 1 tablespoon sugar, optional

Directions

1. To make the Navajo Tacos, start by making the fry bread dough. In a mixing bowl, or in the bowl of a food processor, mix together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Next add in the olive oil and milk and stir (or pulse) just until the dough comes together. It'll be a little sticky in places and a little shaggy in others at this point. Scrape the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and press into a ball. Knead the dough once or twice to bring it together. Return the dough to the mixing bowl, cover, and refrigerate for an hour.
2. While the dough is resting, make the spice paste for the lamb. In a small bowl, combine the cumin, chili powder, garlic powder, and olive oil. Stir a few times to form a smooth paste. Rub generously all over the lamb steak(s) and cover. Transfer to the refrigerator for an hour or so.
3. In a small sauce pot, bring 3 cups of water to a boil. While the water is heating, remove the stems and seeds of the New Mexico chiles and rinse the peppers briefly with cold water. If you prefer some extra heat to your sauce (it's already pretty spicy, though), keep some of the seeds. Transfer the seeded peppers to a blender, tearing them into smaller pieces as you do so. Smash two cloves of garlic and add them to the blender. Peel and coarsely chop a shallot and add it to the blender as well. Finally, add the sherry vinegar, cumin, oregano, and salt.

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Shopping List

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| <input type="checkbox"/> all-purpose flour | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 lb. lamb steak | <input type="checkbox"/> arugula |
| <input type="checkbox"/> baking powder | <input type="checkbox"/> cumin | <input type="checkbox"/> New Mexico chiles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> salt | <input type="checkbox"/> chili powder | <input type="checkbox"/> garlic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> whole milk | <input type="checkbox"/> garlic powder | <input type="checkbox"/> shallot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> olive oil | <input type="checkbox"/> red onion | <input type="checkbox"/> sherry vinegar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frying oil | <input type="checkbox"/> bell pepper | <input type="checkbox"/> sugar |

At this point the water should be boiling, so use either a glass or metal measuring cup to measure out 2 cups of boiling water and pour over the pepper mixture in the blender. Put the lid on the blender and let sit for 30 – 45 minutes.

4. At this point you can prepare the red onion and bell pepper for the grill. Peel and cut the onion into half-inch rings. Cut the pepper into wide, vertical strips so that they will not fall through the grill. Arrange on a plate and drizzle a little bit of oil over them. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Set aside.
5. Once an hour has passed, remove the dough from the fridge and return it to a lightly floured surface. Roll the dough out into a log and divide into 8 even pieces. While it is technically blasphemous to use a rolling pin at this point in the authentic circles of fry bread, I believe that some rules are meant to be broken. Feel free to use your fingers to stretch and push the dough out into small circles, but using a rolling pin is so much faster and easier and to my taste, doesn't negatively impact the fry bread. Use a rolling pin to create roundish, 1/4-inch thick pieces of bread. The diameter should be around 5 or 6 inches.
6. Pour 3 cups of frying oil into a 10-inch skillet and bring up to 350 degrees. Fry the bread one piece at a time for about 2 minutes per side. The dough will puff up while it cooks and so use tongs on occasion to submerge the bread, especially on the second side. The bread will be done when both sides are a deep golden brown. Transfer to paper towels to let excess oil drain from the bread. Repeat until all dough is fried. Set aside on the stove to drain and cool until you eat.
7. It's now time to heat the grill. While the grill is heating up, finish the Sante Fe sauce. Place a towel over the blender (with the lid still on), and puree the pepper mixture for one minute to make the sauce very smooth. Taste the sauce and if it's too spicy, add a tablespoon of sugar. This will help balance the flavors, but won't make it taste sweet. Adjust seasonings to your taste and then set aside.
8. When the grill is warm, cook the lamb, onions and peppers. The onions and peppers will cook in about 4 minutes per side over a medium hot fire. The lamb is too variable to give comprehensive instructions for, but use your best judgment to get the internal temperature you'd prefer. I think medium is perfect for this recipe.
9. Remove the lamb, peppers and onions from the grill. While the lamb is resting, cut the peppers and onions into bite size pieces and arrange on a serving platter. Set out a bowl with arugula and create a buffet with the veggies, chile sauce and fry bread. The lamb will have rested enough by now and so slice it in thin strips. Arrange on a plate with any accumulated juices and add to the buffet. Serve immediately.



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