

Homemade Shepherd's Style Tacos -

Tacos al pastor caseros

Ingredients

2 lb (1 kg)	boneless pork shoulder, loin, or leg
4	guajillo peppers; wiped clean
1	onion; peeled
1 clove	garlic; peeled
1-2	bay leaves
½ cup	vinegar; preferably apple cider or white wine
1 tbsp	annatto powder (or sweet paprika)
½ tsp	dry oregano; preferably Mexican, or use less
½ tsp	dry marjoram
Pinch	all-spice
½ tsp	black pepper
1 tsp	salt, or to taste
2 tbsp	oil, plus a little for the grill
1 bunch	cilantro; washed and chopped coarsely
3 slices	pineapple; core removed, halved
Lime wedges	
Spicy red salsa (homemade, or commercial)	
Warm corn tortillas, preferably small <i>"taqueras"</i> (homemade, or packaged)	



Cut meat into slices about 1/4 inch (1/2 cm) thick; place in a ceramic or glass container and reserve in the fridge. Slice peeled onion into quarters, chopping and reserving three quarters as a topping. Remove seeds and stems from the guajillo peppers. Warm up two tablespoons of oil in a pot over medium heat; fry onions until translucent, then add garlic and continue cooking until garlic is slightly browned, stirring constantly to avoid burning. Add bay leaves and guajillo peppers, frying just for a few seconds until the peppers start to swell, being careful not to burn them. Add half the vinegar, stirring and scraping any bits from the bottom of the pan. Add annatto powder and the rest of the vinegar, stirring to incorporate. Lower heat and cook for two to three more minutes, until the peppers become soft. Remove from heat and allow to cool down. Place cooled mix and oregano, marjoram, all-spice, black pepper and salt in a blender jar and process until smooth. Cover reserved pork with the sauce, making sure to coat all surfaces. Return meat to the fridge, and allow to marinate for at least one hour.

Continue on next page ...

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Close to meal time, warm up a grill (indoor or outdoor). Grill pineapple, turning once, to mark grill lines on both sides. Remove from the heat, slice into chunks and reserve. Brush the grill with a little oil and cook the marinated meat in small batches, flipping, until fully cooked and slightly charred:



Slice each piece of meat as thinly as possible with a very sharp knife, across the grain (photo, left), to simulate the "shaving" on a *trompo* (rotating vertical grill setting). Photo, far left: flavourful and slightly crisp "shavings" of *al pastor* pork:



Serve on warm tortillas, topped with chopped cilantro, onions, and a chunk of pineapple. Offer lime wedges and spicy red sauce on the side:



Notes:

- 1) **An alternative cooking method**, if a grill is not available, is to arrange the meat partially overlapped in a baking dish with rim, and then baking at 375°F (190°C) for a few minutes, until fully cooked. Remove any liquid from the dish and finish under the broiler for a couple of minutes. Slice and serve as above. The meat will not be as tender and juicy as when grilled, so use only if grilling is not available.
- 2) **For a vegan alternative**, use cooked green young jackfruit chunks instead of meat, shred jackfruit, and add al pastor seasoning. After marinating, fry in two tablespoon of oil, and serve as above:

