

Baja Fish Tacos – Close to Authentic

When I lived in Southern California, my family and I spent a lot of time in Baja. We loved to go south of Ensenada to La Bufadora (the blow hole). This beautiful place is located on the Punta Banda peninsula. The sea water blasts upward from air trapped in a cave below. It has changed a lot since our visits. The vendors were just ramshackle buildings with goods and foods. The water was fenced with a low stone hedge and the road was dirt. Now its a full park with constructed buildings, a restaurant and paved roads, but the taco stands are still there – and it's still an amazing sight!

We camped at a beach nearby that had natural hot springs in the sand, vendors selling churros, fresh lobsters and tamales in the morning, and clam cocktails along the roads. One of our favorite places to stop were the fish taco stands.

The lard was heated in the lids of big oil drums turned upside down and heated with fire in the drum itself. Whole heads of garlic were dropped in the oil to flavor it and the fish that cooked in it. They dipped each piece in a batter and fried it to perfection, dropped it on a fresh made tortilla and offered a variety of toppings. Then off you went, taco in hand, to explore the other vendors on the strip.



I have great memories of that place. And I still love an authentic fish taco. This recipe has a few changes. I'm trying to eat more healthy (although I'm not opposed to the real deal from time to time), I've cut a lot of the fat from it. I did use tilapia, a more traditional fish, but you can use an omega3 rich salmon too. Instead of a vat of lard, I've used a small amount of olive oil, pan frying instead of deep-frying. And, the coating is just flour, not a batter. The result is close enough to bring back those rich memories as I savor each bite.

What you need:

Salsa –

- 2 Roma tomatoes, chopped

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white onion, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon jalapeño, minced
- 2 cloves of garlic, crushed or finely minced
- Juice of one lime
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cilantro, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon lemon pepper

Tacos

- 4 large tilapia fillets, cut into quarters
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup masa flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon lemon pepper
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 whole cloves garlic
- 8 corn tortillas

Garnishes

- Shredded cabbage
- Avocado
- Chopped cilantro
- Radishes, sliced thin
- Lime wedges

Make the salsa first. Mix everything except the cilantro and lime in a large bowl.



Stir in the cilantro and lime, then mix it all together and refrigerate for at least an hour.



Next, mix the masa and spices in a shallow bowl. Dredge the fish in the mixture.



Heat the oil in a skillet. When it is good and hot, cook the tilapia until it is lightly browned and cooked through. Move to paper towels to drain.



Heat the tortillas either in the microwave, or wrapped in foil and placed in a hot oven.

Place two strips of tilapia in each tortilla and serve with garnishes and salsa.





Makes 4 servings of two tacos each.

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