**Costa Rican Tacos Ticos**

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I like to call these happy tacos because it’s impossible not to laugh out loud when trying to eat them. Corn tortillas stuffed with shredded beef are fried until crispy and then topped with whimsical ingredients. I use leftover beef from my *cocido* (page 000) and Handmade Corn Tortillas. Of course, you can use store-bought corn tortillas if you wish. The toppings are what make these so much fun to eat: first, a generous amount of shredded cabbage, and then the real enjoyment begins when they’re drizzled with ketchup, mustard, and mayonnaise. I know it sounds funny to use the same condiments you’d usually reserve for hot dogs, but they really work! In Costa Rica, tacos ticos are served either singly or in pairs (called *dobles*) and are wrapped in plastic squares. If you’re planning a taco party, fry the tacos ahead of time and keep them warm in a 250°F oven, for up to 1 hour. Place the condiments in squirt bottles and let everyone assemble and top them as they like.

*Makes 12 tacos*

* 5 cups shredded cabbage
* 1 ½ teaspoons salt
* 2 ½ cups leftover meat from the cocido (recipe in book) or other cooked and shredded beef (see note)
* 12 Handmade Corn Tortillas (recipe in book) or store-bought, warm (see note)
* 12 (8-inch-long) pieces kitchen twine
* Vegetable oil for frying
* Ketchup
* Mustard
* Mayonnaise

Place the cabbage in a large bowl; add enough boiling water to cover and let it sit for exactly one minute. Drain the cabbage well and return it to the bowl. Add the salt and stir; let it sit at room temperature for 30 minutes or until cool. Cover and chill for up to 24 hours.

Working with one tortilla at a time, place 2–3 tablespoons of the shredded beef on one end of it and roll it up tightly, like a cigar (it has to be tight or the beef will escape when the tacos are fried). Tie it snuggly with a piece of twine and set aside; repeat with the remaining tortillas and filling.

Fit a large baking pan with a metal cooling rack; set aside. In a large skillet with high sides, heat 1–2 inches of oil to 360°F (or use a deep fryer according to the manufacturer’s directions). Working in batches, use tongs to place the tacos in the oil. Fry them until golden, about 3–3 ½ minutes, turning them over halfway through. Transfer them to the prepared rack to drain.

To plate, place two tacos on a plate, top with a generous amount of the cabbage, and drizzle with the condiments. Serve immediately.

**[more]**

NOTE: If you don’t want to make the cocido, simply boil a 1-pound piece of beef roast or flank steak in salted water until it’s cooked through. Cool and shred. Shredded rotisserie chicken works well, too.

To prevent corn or flour tortillas from breaking when folded or rolled, heat them briefly. To do this, wrap several tortillas in a clean, damp kitchen towel; microwave at 1-minute intervals until they are warm. Alternatively, wrap them in foil and place them in a preheated 350°F oven for 10–15 minutes. You can also heat them, one at a time, directly over a flame of a gas stove (or an outdoor grill) for 20 seconds on each side. Keep the warm tortillas wrapped in a kitchen towel as you work. It’s a good idea to have a few extra tortillas in case some break as the tacos are shaped.

**To access this recipe’s accompanying photo, please go to www.ibiblio.org/uncp/media/gutierrez/**

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