

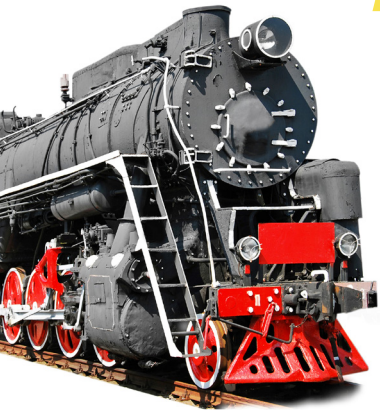


¡VIVA FAJITA!

Fajita Cookbook

ABOUT TEX-MEX

A delicious history of Tex-Mex cuisine



The name

The word "Tex-Mex" (pronounced: well, Tex-Mex) entered the American vocabulary in 1875 as a nickname for the Texas Mexican Railway. In the 1920s, it was used to describe the railroad and the people of Mexican descent born in Texas. Eventually, Tex-Mex became synonymous with the Mexican food of that area.

The origin

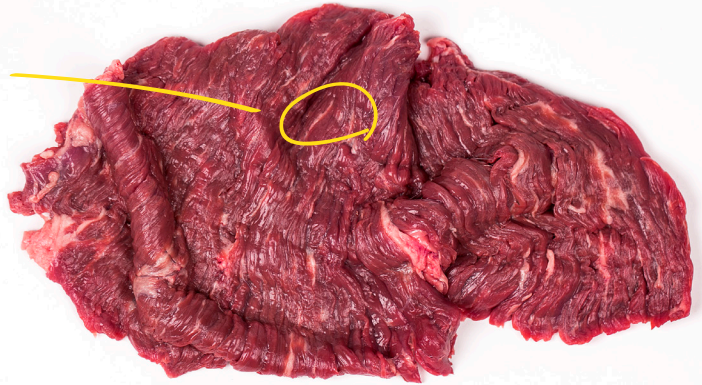
Tex-Mex cooking originated from Tejanos (Texans of Mexican descent) as a mix of Mexican and Spanish foods with Texan ingredients. Ingredients such as cheddar cheese, beef, wheat, and cumin were woven into traditional Mexican recipes, giving rise to wheat tortillas, nachos, chili con carne, and, here comes the segue...fajitas.



Fajitas

The fajita is a staple of Tex-Mex cuisine originating in the 1930s. In Spanish, “faja” means “belt,” referring to the resemblance of the strips of beef skirt steak that were popular with vaqueros, Mexican cowboys, who would grill them over an open flame. Traditionally, skirt steaks were considered undesirable as they tend to be on the tougher side. To be palatable, they typically required a meat tenderizer, an acidic marinade, or a really strong jaw. Considering there are only four skirts’ per cow, fajitas remained a regional dish for many years.

Located near the bottom of
the cow



In 1969, Sonny Falcon, a meat market manager from Austin with a really cool name, opened a fajitas stand at the Dieciséis de Septiembre celebration in Kyle, Texas. He grilled the meats in front of the customers and served it in tortillas.

In 1970, German-born chef, George Weidmann added fajitas to the menu at the La Vista restaurant in the Hyatt Regency Hotel In Austin, Texas. Weidmann’s fajitas featured steak, peppers, onions, and herbs arranged on a sizzling and smoking cast-iron skillet. Weidmann’s restaurant quickly became the most profitable in the Hyatt chain—ch-ching!—and fajitas began to catch on.

When Chili’s rolled out its fajitas to 23 locations in 1984, the fajitas craze exploded. Fun fact: Chili’s sells over 60 million pounds of fajita meat a year!

As fajitas grew in popularity, restaurants experimented with different proteins, and chicken and shrimp became interchangeable with skirt steak.

Now, it’s your turn to add your own fajita flare. This cookbook has the recipes, tips, and techniques you need to claim your rightful title as Señor Fajita.



SKIRT STEAK

with Smoky Almond Sauce



Ingredients

Marinade

- 1/3 cup lime juice
- 1/4 cup pure pineapple juice
- 2 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 tbsp. ground cumin and chili powder
- 1 tsp. salt and 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/4 cup cilantro

Fajitas

- 2 lbs. skirt or flank steak
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 2 medium white onions
- 1 large poblano pepper
- 2-3 bell peppers
- 1 cup Smokin' Ancho Almond Sauce (p. 6)

Beef



Heat



Prep Time

15 minutes

Cook Time

15 minutes

Serves

3-4 people

Difficulty



Prep

1

Mince the garlic cloves and cilantro. Combine all marinade ingredients in a bowl. Taste and adjust to preference. Coat the steak and let it marinate in a bowl or resealable bag. Let it sit covered for 3-4 hours in refrigerator, while you ponder the meaning of life. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes prior to cooking. Deseed the poblano pepper. Slice the onions, poblano pepper, and bell peppers.

Cooking

1

Heat your cast-iron skillet over high heat for several minutes. Add steak to pan and fry on each side for 3 minutes to yield a medium-rare doneness. Remove steak and allow it to rest for 3-4 minutes. Frying will make it quite exhausted. Slice against the grain into thin slices.

2

Heat 1 tbsp. of oil on a pan over high heat. Add in the onions, poblano, and bell peppers. Allow the veggies to sizzle for 2-3 minutes and toss as necessary.

3

Heat your cast-iron fajita pan for 3-4 minutes. Transfer the cooked veggies and steak onto the sizzling pan. Top steak with the Smokin Almond Sauce. That recipe is conveniently located on the next page. Serve with tortillas, rice, and your favorite toppings.





Ingredients

- 1 oz. ancho chilies
- Boiling water
- 2 large garlic cloves
- ½ cup toasted pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup almond butter
- 1 tbsp. sherry vinegar
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Vegetarian



Heat



Prep Time

15 minutes

Cook Time

5 minutes

Serves

3-4 people

Difficulty



Prep

- 1 Stem and deseed the ancho chilies. In a medium-size bowl, tear up the ancho. Cover the bowl and allow to soften for 15 minutes. Drain the chilies and discard any seeds and stems that snuck past you in step 1. Slice the garlic cloves.

Cook

- 2 Add the pumpkin seeds, almond butter, vinegar, and 1/2 cup of boiling water into a food processor and puree to a coarse paste. Add 1/2 cup of oil in a steady stream while pulsing. Season with salt and pepper.



Tequila Glazed CHICKEN FAJITAS

Ingredients

- Marinade
- ½ cup gold tequila
 - 1 cup freshly squeezed lime juice (5-6 limes)
 - ½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice (2 oranges)
 - 1 tbsp. chili powder
 - 1 tbsp. minced jalapeño pepper
 - 3 garlic cloves
 - 1 tbsp. honey
 - 2 tsp. kosher salt
 - 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- Fajitas
- 3 whole chicken thighs (skin on)

Chicken



Heat



Prep Time

10 minutes

Rest Time

8 hours

Cook Time

15 minutes

Serves

5-6 people

Difficulty



Prep

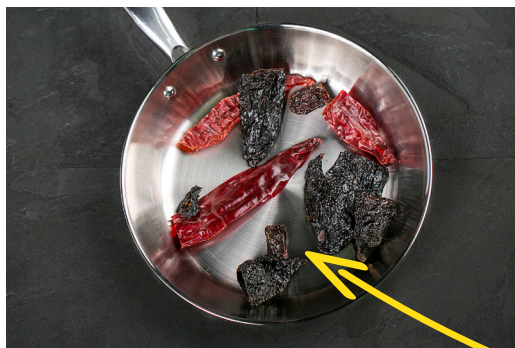
- 1 Destem and deseed the jalapeño pepper. Mince the jalapeño pepper and garlic. Combine the tequila, lime juice, orange juice, chili powder, jalapeño pepper, garlic, honey, salt, and pepper in a large bowl or resealable bag. Add the chicken breasts and let marinate in refrigerator overnight.

Cook

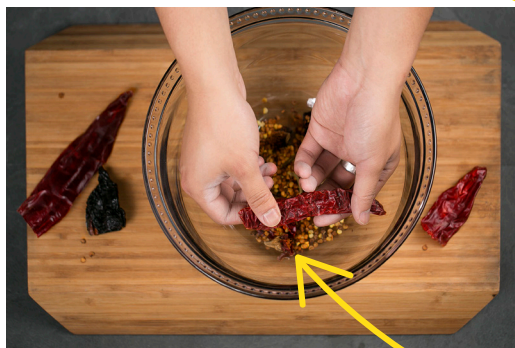
- 1 Heat up your grill and brush the rack with oil to prevent sticking. Remove the chicken from the marinade and season well with salt and pepper. Grill the chicken skin-side down until nicely browned, about 4 minutes. Flip the chicken and cook for another 8 minutes. Remove from the grill and let rest for 3 minutes. Resist the urge to pop it directly into your mouth.
- 2 Heat your cast-iron fajita pan for 3-4 minutes. Transfer the cooked chicken onto the sizzling pan. Serve with tortillas, rice, and your favorite chicken-friendly toppings.

TECHNIQUE

Making chili paste from dried chilies



Chili paste is extremely versatile and easy to make. Unlike that strange-smelling milk in the back corner of your fridge, chili paste will stay good in your refrigerator for weeks and is a great base for sauces, salsa, chili, and even as a marinade for meat. Regardless which chilies you use, the process is the same, so have fun experimenting with all the dried peppers you can get your hands on.



keep them moving. You don't want them to burn

Begin by toasting the chilies over an open flame, like your stove top. If your stove is electric, you can toast them in a pan without any oil. Once the chilies have softened and become fragrant, remove the stems and seeds. It might be a good idea to wear gloves if you're handling hot chilies. And maybe wait until later to pluck that dangling eyelash.

Discard the seeds and stems



Wash chilies with water, then soak them in a bowl of warm water. They will need to soak for around 10-15 minutes, or until they are extremely soft. You should be able to pull them apart easily with your fingers.

Strain the water and add the chilies to the blender or food processor. Add more fresh water, garlic, spices, and salt. Vinegar can also raise the acidity, which helps preserve the paste for longer in the fridge.

Time to taste the paste

Process on high until you've reached a smooth consistency. Add more liquid if necessary. Remember, you can always add more, but you can't take it out. Season with salt to taste. Store in a jar in your refrigerator.



While you can use whatever chilis you can find, here's a good starter recipe:

- 6 dried ancho chilies
- 3 dried chipotle chilies
- 6 dried California chilies
- 2 dried arbol chilies
- 8 cloves of garlic
- 1 tbsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. salt



Shrimp Fajitas

Ingredients

Marinade

- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 cup chili paste (p. 14)
- ½ tsp. salt and pepper

Fajitas

- 1½ lb. shrimp (10-25 count)

Seafood



Heat



Prep Time

20 minutes

Cook Time

35 minutes

Serves

1-2 people

Difficulty



Prep

- 1 Combine the orange juice and chili paste in a bowl. Taste and adjust to preference. Sweet and savory, right? Coat the shrimp and let marinate in a bowl or resealable bag. Let sit covered for 3-4 hours in refrigerator.

Cook

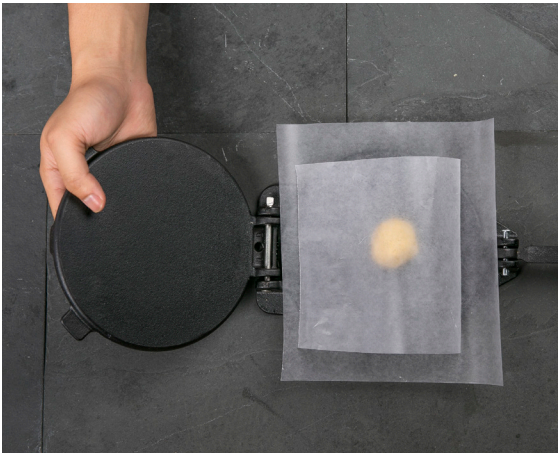
- 1 Remove the shrimp from marinade and wipe off excess. Heat vegetable oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add shrimp to hot skillet in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper and cook until pink on both sides, around 1 to 2 minutes per side.
- 2 Heat your cast-iron fajita pan for 3-4 minutes. Transfer into shrimp into the sizzling pan. Serve with tortillas, rice, your favorite toppings, and a smile.

TECHNIQUE

Making tortillas



Texture should look like this



Making the dough

In a bowl, combine masa harina, salt, baking powder, and vegetable shortening. The amounts are conveniently located at the bottom of the next page. Use your hands to work through the mixture and break up any shortening until the mixture has a slightly mealy texture.

Add in water and stir until it's absorbed by the dough. Mix and knead the dough by hand until smooth. Knead an extra minute or two if you've had a tough day. It's quite soothing.

Cover and let rest for 60 minutes.

After an hour, divide the dough into golf-ball-sized chunks and roll into a ball between your hands. A dough ball of this size will make tortillas 5-6 inches in diameter. You're thinking about making one mega-tortilla, aren't you? Don't do it.

Flattening

To flatten the dough, use a tortilla press and 2 squares of waxed paper. Place a dough ball in between the waxed paper and press like you mean it. For a more evenly shaped tortilla, flip the tortilla over and press a second time.

If you don't have a tortilla press handy, a rolling pin will work as well.

Place flour on a surface to prevent sticking and roll out. Flip and rotate continuously to get an even roll.

Cooking the tortilla

Heat up some vegetable oil in a griddle or skillet on medium heat.

Place a tortilla and cook until it starts to lift.

Once it lifts, flip the tortilla and cook until it starts to slightly puff up, indicating that it's fully cooked.

Keep the finished tortillas warm and cozy by wrapping them in the tortilla warmer or a cloth towel.

Reheating tortillas

To keep the tortillas nice and moist when reheating, wrap a stack of 5 in a wet paper towel and microwave for 30-second intervals until warm.

Here's what your little tortillaria will need:

- 3½ cups masa harina
- 3 tbsp. cold vegetable shortening
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1½ cups warm water





**WAIN
GRATES**