

A Deprived Expat's Fish Taco Recipe

It's not easy being an expat, especially when you're deprived of fish tacos.

This post is mainly for any of my readers deprived of your favorite home foods, especially since you are living the 'good life' across the pond somewhere. Therefore, today's post is about fish tacos. Why? Because it's Cinco de Mayo of course. And because fish tacos rock!

We don't have access to fish tacos around these parts and when I first heard about them, the idea sort of turned me off. Yes, I like fish. In fact, I eat fish at least twice a week, but fish and tacos just didn't seem a likely combination. But then on a recent trip to California, I decided to try them. I was hooked from the first bite and took every chance I could to eat them.



As I was looking for recipes for our Cinco de Mayo celebration, the idea of a plate of fish tacos made my tongue jump for joy (again).

So, What is a Fish Taco?

It's simple math really. Fish + taco = Fish taco. Hee-hee, let's break it down even further.

Fish tacos were reborn in Baja, the second earth's second-longest peninsula off the Northwest coast of Mexico, but have been extremely popular in Southern California for many years.

Let's step back a bit and give credit where credit is due. Anthropological evidence shows that the indigenous people living in the lake region of the Valley of Mexico traditionally ate tacos filled with small fish. Praise for fish tacos, now onto the recipe. □

A Simple Fish Taco Recipe

You can make fish tacos (Tacos de Pescado) with a hearty white fish such as, salmon, cod, tilapia, or even with shrimp (Tacos de camarones). The taco filling generally consists of shredded cabbage, a sour cream or Greek yogurt-based dressing, and fresh cilantro. Interpret your own fish taco recipe as I have below.

Ingredients (Makes 4 medium-sized tacos)

- 1 pound (450 grams) salmon fillets (cod, tilapia, or shrimp)
- Flour
- Creole seasoning
- Sea salt and pepper
- Sunflower oil
- Cooked corn kernels (roasted adds an intense flavor)
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- Fresh cilantro
- Fresh basil
- 1 lime
- Mexican oregano
- Chipotle (optional)
- Soft shell tacos
- 1/2 red or yellow pepper, thinly sliced
- Arugula

Fish Taco Yogurt Salsa

In a medium bowl, mix together Greek yogurt and 1/2 teaspoon each of ground Mexican oregano and fresh lime juice until the consistency is not too runny. Add sea salt and chipotle to taste.

Cooking Instructions

1. Heat a heavy pan over medium-high heat.
2. Season fish on meat side with Creole seasoning or salt

and pepper.

3. Lightly dust the fish with flour and shake off the excess.
4. Add a tablespoon of sunflower oil to the pan.
5. Cook fish pieces until lightly golden brown, break into chunks, and set on a paper towel.
6. Remove excess oil from pan and lightly fry the tortillas, they should still be soft to handle.

To serve, place fried fish pieces in a tortilla, add the healthy colorful toppings of your choice such as roasted corn, red pepper slices, fresh cilantro, fresh basil, yogurt sauce, and arugula. Celebrate Cinco de Mayo by cooking some healthy fish tacos served with a glass of refreshing [Aguas Frescas](#).

¡Buen provecho!

Basic Homemade Poultry Seasoning Recipe

An easy basic homemade poultry seasoning recipe for stuffing or any dish that needs a woodsy aromatic Thanksgiving flavor.

Oops!... I Did It Again. It's almost Thanksgiving and I nearly forgot about one of my favorite holidays. I blame it on my expat life in Germany. After 15 years of life in Germany I'm

so accustomed to the German holidays that Thanksgiving crept up on me. No time for excuses this year, I'm celebrating with about 70 American colleagues and volunteered to make dressing (stuffing for you city folk). Darn!... I Did It Again. I forgot to share my basic homemade poultry seasoning recipe with you.



Ingredients needed to make a basic homemade poultry seasoning.

I gave up on buying store-bought poultry seasoning because it contains too much of what I don't need and too little of what I do need. Too much salt ruins the dressing and too little of the other ingredients makes my stuffing lack that Thanksgiving flavor I love.

The difference between stuffing and dressing has nothing to do with where you place it (in or outside of the bird), but more to do with where you're from.

The term 'dressing' is used more by Southern folks. Think cornbread dressing. Yum, my mouth is watering already. The

term 'stuffing' is more likely to be used by folks outside of the Southern states. Whatever you call it make sure it's packed with good-old homemade poultry seasoning.

If you're a vegetarian like me, don't let the word 'poultry' scare you. The basic homemade poultry seasoning is vegan and not only tastes great on bread and potato-based dishes too, but your bird too.

Here's a simple homemade poultry seasoning recipe you can make in a snap. With a few seasonings you probably already have in your cupboard, you can make a basic poultry seasoning in a jiffy. Don't forget to double the recipe so you have some leftover for Christmas.



Crush homemade poultry seasonings in a mortar and pestle.

Homemade Basic Homemade Poultry Seasoning Recipe Ingredients

This is a basic recipe, so as you experiment with it change the quantities to your taste.

- 1 tablespoon marjoram
- 1 tablespoon ground sage
- 1 tablespoon ground thyme
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon crushed celery salt (or celery seed for a low-sodium version)
- 1 teaspoon rosemary
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (optional)

Place the herbs in a mortar and pestle and crush them. A food processor or spice grinder works well too (I don't have one yet, but maybe Santa will surprise me this year.).

Note: No birds were harmed in the making of my basic homemade poultry seasoning. ☐

Classic Red Beans and Rice Recipe

This New Orleans classic red beans and rice recipe will take about two-three hours to cook, but so worth the wait. I omitted the ham bone and cook the dish with Andouille sausage (spicy sausage) which is easier to come by in Germany and adds mega flavor. Add [the holy trinity](#), cook the beans until creamy, service over white rice on a Monday (or any day).

You can also make a vegetarian version and omit the sausage.

Either way you too can enjoy the flavor of classic Red Beans and Rice when you're not in New Orleans.



New Orleans Red Beans and Rice

Red Beans and Rice Recipe

Ingredients (Makes 8 servings)

- 1 pound dried red beans, rinsed and sorted over (the bad beans will quickly float to the top)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
- [Holy trinity](#)
 - 1 1/2 cups chopped yellow onions
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped celery
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped green bell peppers
- 5-6 cloves garlic, chopped

- 1 teaspoon Creole seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 bay leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon dried sage
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 large smoked ham hock or 3/4 lb. smoked ham, diced (Optional for vegetarians)
- 1 pound Andouille or spicy sausage, sliced in half and then into 1 inch pieces (Optional)
- 4-6 cups water
- 4 cups cooked long-grain white rice (Preferably Louisiana rice)
- Hot sauce (Preferably Louisiana hot sauce)

Cooking Instructions

1. On Sunday evening, cover the beans with water and soak in a large pot of water overnight.
2. On Monday morning, exchange the water (to reduce flatulence) and boil the beans until the water is rolling, for about 1 hour ensuring the beans are always covered with water.
3. Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the Holy Trinity (onion, celery, and bell pepper) and celery and cook for about for 3 to 4 minutes until ingredients are translucent.
4. Add the garlic to the vegetables and sauté for about 4 minutes being careful not to burn the garlic.
5. Add the seasonings, vegetables, and smoked sausage to the large pot of beans and add enough water to cover the beans.
6. Simmer for about 2 hours adding more seasonings as desired and stirring occasionally so the nothing burns or sticks to the bottom of the pot.
7. After a few hours, the beans should become creamy. If

not, remove them from the heat and with the back of a heavy spoon, mash about 1/4 of the beans against the side of the pot. Continue to cook until the beans are tender and creamy, about 15 to 20 minutes adding water if required.

8. Remove beans from the heat and remove the bay leaves.
9. Serve over steamed Louisiana rice and top with chopped green onions.

Monday is Red Beans and Rice Day

Red Beans and Rice Day

During my time living and studying in New Orleans, I always wondered why my friends would anticipate their mother's or grandmother's meals at the beginning of the work week. That's because Monday is Red Beans and Rice Day in the Crescent City.

Whether served up at home or as the Monday special at many of the New Orleans restaurants, there's nothing like a pot of slow cooked creamy red beans. Just serve them over rice and top with a few dashes of Louisiana hot sauce. It's pure Cajun and Creole heaven!

They're so good Louis Armstrong not only ate them, but he signed his name,

*"Red Beans and Ricely
Yours,
Louis Armstrong!"*



New Orleans Red Beans and Rice

So why do we eat the Louisiana Creole dish on Mondays?

Traditionally on Sunday a ham was served for supper after church. You probably remember having a big meal every Sunday at Grandma's, right? Since the following day Monday was laundry day and during those times people didn't have washing machines a low-fuss meal needed to be prepared.

You see, the ladies of the house (generally house maids) had to scrub the family's clothes by hand, often having to boil the garments and then use a crank and wringer to dry them as much as possible in preparation for hanging them on the clothes line.

As you can imagine, there wasn't much time to cook a meal, let alone a fancy one. Therefore, the women would soak the red beans overnight, put a pot of beans on the stove; including the "[The Holy Trinity](#)", a few other simple ingredients, as well as Sunday dinner's ham bone. Voila! The laundry was cleaned and a filling and low-cost delicious meal was ready for supper on Monday evening.

Who Brought Red Beans to New Orleans?

Red beans were most likely first introduced in New Orleans when sugar plantation owners fled Saint-Dominge (Haiti) for Louisiana after the Haitian slaves revolted in the 1790s. The old Haitian recipe *Riz et Pois Rouges* mirrors the red beans and rice recipes that slaves either cooked for themselves or their slave master's families. The dish is called *Arroz con habichuela* in Spanish-speaking countries, such as Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Dominican Republic, and is also a popular staple meal. You'll even find varieties in Jamaica and India too.

While traditional New Orleans cuisine is thought to be spicy (namely Cajun and less often Creole dishes) red beans and rice are rather mild, so you'll always find a large bottle of Louisiana hot sauce on the table if you want to add some kick.

It's almost Monday wherever you are in the world, so how about cooking a pot of Red Beans and Rice ?

Mexican Wedding Cakes Recipe

I wonder when the holiday baking period officially ends. After Christmas or before New Year's Eve? Does it end on January 6th to celebrate Epiphany? In our home the holiday baking will continue for a while because baking and cooking actually relax me. I know, I'm weird like that.

The other day I had a sweet idea to invite the family over for dessert after our post-Christmas lunch at a local restaurant. To continue the holiday celebration I'm serving an international array of sweets. A French Gateau au Chocolat, an American apple pie, a plate of [German Spekulatius cookies](#), and last but not least, Mexican Wedding Cakes.

No, no one is getting married (at least not that I know of), but I want to celebrate a sweet Christmas with the family by serving Mexican Wedding Cakes in contrast to the multi-tiered conventional wedding cake.



Mexican Wedding Cake Cookies

History of Mexican Wedding Cakes

Mexican Wedding Cakes are actually bite-sized cookies traditionally served at special occasions such as weddings and christenings. The recipe calls for rich ingredients such as butter and sugar which in years past was normally reserved for significant events.

In Mexico the sugar cookie became popular following Spanish colonization in the 16th century. Some food historians believe these types of cookies and cakes derive from Moorish

traditions that spread through Europe and eventually reached the Americas.

Other historians say Mexican wedding cakes may have migrated to Mexico with European nuns, or may have been associated with cookies served beside Russian samovars (tea urns).

Somehow, someway the cookie recipe traveled far and wide.

One Cookie, One World

Across the world, the basic recipe includes butter, powdered sugar, flour, finely chopped nuts, and the best pure vanilla extract you can find. The shape varies from round and flat to crescent-shaped.

The cookie name on the other hand is quite diverse depending on the country. You'll find them called Russian Tea Cakes, Mandulás kifli (Hungary), Polvorones (Spain), Finska kakor (Finland), and Napoleonshatte (Danish) and the list of names go on.

Holiday celebrations will continue for a few weeks, so I won't end my holiday baking right away. The Mexican Wedding Cake cookies are easy to make and your guests will really love the powdery melt-in-your mouth cookie.

Mexican Wedding Cakes Recipe

*Butter and nuts and vanilla to spice,
melt in your mouth Mexican Wedding Cakes,
are heavenly nice!*



Mexican Wedding Cake Cookies

Cookie Ingredients (Makes about 50 cookies)

- 1 cup (105 grams) nuts (almonds, pecans, walnuts, or hazelnuts)
- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter (high fat content European-style) cut into teaspoon sized cubes, room temperature
- 1/2 cup (30 grams) confectioners' (powdered or icing) sugar
- 2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups minus 2 tablespoons (255 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons flour (for grinding the nuts)

Sugar Dusting Ingredients

- 1 cup (120 grams) powdered (icing or confectioners) sugar, sifted



Mexican Wedding Cake cookie dough

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (177 degrees C) and place rack in center of oven.
2. Place nuts on a baking sheet and bake until lightly brown, about 8 minutes. Allow the nuts to cool completely.
3. Place nuts and 2 tablespoons (25 grams) of flour into your food processor. Pulsate until the nuts are finely ground (being careful not to form a paste).
4. In your stand mixer (hand or electric mixer), beat the

butter and sugar until light and fluffy (about 3 minutes). Add the vanilla extract and baste. Add the remaining flour, salt, and cinnamon and beat until combined. Stir in the ground nuts.

5. Cover and refrigerate the dough until firm (about 60 minutes).
6. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
7. Using a large melon baller, take the approximate amount of dough needed to form the chilled dough into balls about 1 inch (2.5 cm). Place them 2 inches (5 cm) apart on the prepared baking sheets.
8. Bake for about 8-11 minutes, or until the edges of the cookies just begin to turn light brown.



Mexican Wedding Cake cookies after baking

9. Remove the cookies from the oven and carefully place them on a wire rack to cool for about 5 minutes.

10. Place 1 cup (120 grams) of sifted confectioners' sugar on a flat plate or in a bowl. Work quickly and roll the hot cookies in the sugar, one at a time using a spoon or knife to cover them completely. Alternatively, you can sift confectioners' sugar directly onto the cookies.
11. Place the cookies on a wire rack to cool completely before storing (in an airtight container).

Before serving you may want to dust the cookies again using sifted confectioners' sugar.

Bon Appétit!