

Putting A Healthy Spin On The Popular Fish Taco

BY SARA MOULTON
Associated Press

Mexican cuisine has been popular for a long time, but my recent travels around our country have persuaded me that fish tacos are big now in a way they never were before.

Naturally, perhaps, they are easiest to find in regions with a strong Hispanic influence — particularly California, Texas and Florida — but I've also been bumping into them in Chicago and New York. Soon enough, they should be just about as ubiquitous as falafel. It's a happy thing.

Folks in Mexico's coastal cities — where fresh fish and tacos are both plentiful — have been enjoying fish tacos since before the arrival of the first Europeans. But if any one individual can take credit for the north-of-the-border spread of this culinary delight, it is Ralph Rubio.

On spring break from his studies at San Diego State University in 1973, Rubio flipped for the fish tacos in San Felipe, a port town on the Baja California peninsula. Ten years later, back in San Diego, he opened Rubio's Baja Grill, which specialized in fish tacos. Today, there are hundreds of Rubio's locations.

Traditional fish tacos consist of battered fish topped with shredded cabbage, a drizzle of citrus mayo, all wrapped in a corn tortilla. But there's plenty of room for variation.

These days the fish might be grilled rather than battered and fried. Sometimes it's served on flour tortillas, sometimes on corn tortillas. It's almost always topped with some kind of creamy sauce, as well as with shredded cabbage and/or avocado. Whatever. I've never met a fish taco I didn't like.

My version is light on calories, but heavy on flavor. The fish is lightly-floured and sauteed rather than deep-fried. The citrus mayonnaise sauce went bye-bye in favor of a puree of avocado and buttermilk. The avocado contains healthy fat, and the buttermilk is as lean as skim milk, but much tastier. Topping it off is shredded cabbage, carrots and radishes tossed with vinegar, salt and a pinch of sugar.

Fans of chilies will love the sliced jalapeno garnish. I think the cilantro is key, too, but if you were born with the anti-cilantro gene (a real thing!), you can swap in basil instead. Finally, those of you who worry that corn tortillas are high in calories can relax; two 6-inch corn tortillas, softened up and toasted without oil in a dry skillet, weigh in at just 80 calories.

A note about the fish: I used tilapia because it is sustainable, affordable and widely available all year. But substitute any fish you like. Just keep in mind that a thinner fish will take less time to cook.

HEALTHY FISH TACOS WITH BUTTERMILK AVOCADO PUREE

Start to finish: 40 minutes
Servings: 4

- 1 large Hass avocado, peeled, pitted and cut into eighths
- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 2 cloves garlic, minced, divided
- Zest and juice of 1 lime
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 cups shredded Napa cabbage
- 1 1/2 cups coarsely grated carrot
- 1 cup coarsely grated radishes
- 1/4 cup white wine or cider vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar, or to taste
- Hot sauce, to taste
- 1 pound tilapia fillets, cut into

NJ Town OKs Boardwalk Ban On Saggy Pants

WILDWOOD, N.J. (AP) — Wearing your pants too low in one New Jersey shore resort town is about to get expensive.

Wildwood has passed a law banning overly saggy pants, providing for fines of between \$25 and \$200 for violators.

The law was passed Wednesday. It prohibits pants that droop 3 inches below the waist, exposing skin or underwear.

Mayor Ernest Troiano (troy-AHN'-oh) says many longtime visitors to the popular shore town have complained about having to look at people's rear ends "hanging out" while walking the boardwalk.

Civil libertarians say the law is unconstitutional and likely will be overturned if it's challenged in court.

The ban takes effect July 2 and applies only to the boardwalk.

- 8 equal pieces
- Whole-wheat flour, for coating the fish
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Eight 6-inch corn tortillas
- Sliced fresh jalapeno peppers, to serve
- Chopped fresh cilantro, to serve
- Heat the oven to 200 F.
- In a food processor, combine the avocado, buttermilk, 1 clove of garlic, lime juice and salt and pepper. Puree until smooth, then set aside.
- In a medium bowl, combine

the cabbage, remaining garlic, carrot, radishes, vinegar, sugar, lime zest and hot sauce. Season with salt and pepper and toss well. Set aside.

Heat a heavy skillet (such as cast-iron or stainless steel, but not nonstick) over medium heat. One at a time, place the tortillas in the skillet and toast for about 30 seconds per side. As the tortillas are toasted, stack them on a sheet of foil. Wrap the foil around the tortillas, then place them in the over to keep warm. Alternatively, the tortillas can be

held with tongs and toasted directly over a gas burner for a few seconds per side.

In a pie plate or other wide, shallow bowl, combine about 1 cup of flour with 1 tablespoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of pepper. One at a time, dredge each piece of fish through the flour until coated evenly. Shake off any excess.

In a large nonstick skillet over medium-high, heat about 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high. Add half of the fish to the pan and cook, turning once, until

golden and cooked through, about 3 minutes a side. Transfer to an oven-safe plate and set in the oven to keep warm. Repeat with the remaining oil and fish.

To serve, top each tortilla with a bit of the avocado puree, then a piece of fish. Drain the cabbage mixture, then mound some of that over each portion. Serve with jalapeno slices and cilantro on the side.

Nutrition information per serving: 500 calories; 190 calories from fat (38 percent of total calories); 22 g fat (3 g saturated;

0 g trans fats); 60 mg cholesterol; 51 g carbohydrate; 10 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 31 g protein; 370 mg sodium.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sara Moulton was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years, and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows. She currently stars in public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals" and has written three cookbooks, including "Sara Moulton's Everyday Family Dinners."



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