

# STEAK TACOS

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*Serves 4 to 6. Published September 1, 2008. From Cook's Illustrated.*

## WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

To develop a steak taco recipe with an indoor cooking method that yielded steak taco meat as tender, juicy, and rich-tasting as the grilled method, we chose flank steak, beefy and tender when sliced thinly across the grain. Pan-searing gave us the browned exterior and crisp, brittle edges characteristic of grilled meat. A paste of oil, cilantro, scallions, garlic, and jalapeño applied to the meat and scraped off just before cooking gave our steak taco recipe a flavor boost without sacrificing browning.

For a less spicy dish, remove some or all of the ribs and seeds from the jalapeños before chopping them for the marinade. In addition to the toppings suggested below, try serving the tacos with Sweet and Spicy Pickled Onions (see related recipe), thinly sliced radishes or cucumber, or salsa.

## Herb Paste

- 1/2** cup packed fresh cilantro leaves
- 3** medium garlic cloves , roughly chopped
- 3** medium scallions , roughly chopped (about 1/3 cup)
- 1** medium jalapeño chile , stemmed and roughly chopped (see note)
- 1/2** teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4** cup vegetable oil
- 1** tablespoon fresh lime juice

## Steak

- 1** flank steak (1 1/2 to 1 3/4 pounds), trimmed of excess fat and cut lengthwise (with grain) into 4 equal pieces (see below)
- 1** tablespoon kosher salt or 1 1/2 teaspoons table salt
- 1/2** teaspoon sugar
- 1/2** teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2** tablespoons vegetable oil

## Tacos

- 12** (6-inch) corn tortillas , warmed (see note)
- Fresh cilantro leaves
- Minced white or red onion
- Lime wedges

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. FOR THE HERB PASTE:** Pulse cilantro, garlic, scallions, jalapeño, and cumin in food processor until finely chopped, ten to twelve 1-second pulses, scraping down sides as necessary. Add oil and process until mixture is smooth and resembles pesto, about 15 seconds, scraping down sides of workbowl as necessary. Transfer 2 tablespoons herb paste to medium bowl; whisk in lime juice and set aside.
- 2. FOR THE STEAK:** Using dinner fork, poke each piece of steak 10 to 12 times on each side. Place in large baking dish; rub all sides of steak pieces evenly with salt and then coat with remaining herb paste. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 30 minutes or up to 1 hour.
- 3.** Scrape herb paste off steak and sprinkle all sides of pieces evenly with sugar and pepper. Heat oil in 12-inch heavy-bottomed nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until smoking. Place steak in skillet and cook until well browned, about 3 minutes. Flip steak and sear until second side is well browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Using tongs, stand each piece on a cut side and cook, turning as necessary, until all cut sides are well browned and internal temperature registers 125 to 130 degrees on an instant-read thermometer, 2 to 7 minutes. Transfer steak to cutting board and let rest 5 minutes.

4. **FOR THE TACOS:** Using sharp chef's knife or carving knife, slice steak pieces across grain into 1/8-inch-thick pieces. Transfer sliced steak to bowl with herb paste-lime juice mixture and toss to coat. Season with salt. Spoon small amount of sliced steak into center of each warm tortilla and serve immediately, passing toppings separately.

### SHOPPING

Corn Tortillas for Tacos The rule of thumb when buying tortillas is to buy a brand made with nothing more than ground corn treated with lime (an alkali that removes the germ and hull) and water. Look for brands sold in the refrigerator case of the supermarket, as these have few, if any, preservatives and tend to be more moist and flavorful.

### STEP-BY-STEP

Keys to Tender, Flavorful Beef

			
<p>1. <b>Cut:</b> Slice flank steak into strips that can be browned on all sides.</p>		<p>4. <b>Sear:</b> Cook steak in generous 2 tablespoons oil to promote browning.</p>	
			
<p>2. <b>Poke:</b> Pierce steak pieces with fork to allow herb paste to penetrate.</p>		<p>5. <b>Slice:</b> Cut steak thinly across grain to ensure tenderness.</p>	
			
<p>3. <b>Salt:</b> Season meat and coat with herb paste; let stand at least 30 minutes.</p>		<p>6. <b>Toss:</b> Mix steak with more herb paste and lime juice to brighten flavors.</p>	

### TORTILLAS

Toast tortillas in a dry skillet over medium-high heat until softened and speckled with brown spots, 20 to 30 seconds per side. You can also use the oven: Divide the tortillas into 2 stacks and wrap each stack in foil. Heat the tortillas on the middle rack of a 350-degree oven for 5 minutes. Keep the warmed tortillas wrapped in foil or a kitchen towel until ready to use or they will dry out. (If your tortillas are very dry, pat each with a little water before warming.)