

Smoky, savory street tacos a perfect pre-prep dish for a relaxing Labor Day



Street Tacos

Photos Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

My son was visiting his brother and discovered a wonderful cookbook, “Rachel’s Good Eats,” on the kitchen shelf. He saw so many great recipes and wanted to try them at home. So, we quickly got around to making the Mexican Street Tacos and were so taken with this recipe, that we have made it four times in the same number of weeks! The chicken thighs are first browned with this amazing rub made of cumin, chili powder, oregano, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Then, instead of finishing them on the stove as the recipe indicates, we slow cook them in a Dutch oven for about 2 1/2 hours until they are fall-off-the-bone tender. The kitchen smells so

delicious as these are cooking in the oven. Then we make the tacos with the shredded chicken and all of the fixings — shredded cabbage, diced tomatoes, cheese, cilantro, sliced radishes, jalapeños, lime wedges and guacamole. Lots of guacamole! I just used this same chicken along with shredded breast meat in my enchiladas and am really excited about that too.

Instead of the regular chili powder called for in the recipe, which is usually a blend of chili powder and other spices, I substitute New Mexico chili powder, because it has mild heat, but such a beautifully robust and slightly smoky chili flavor. Not surprisingly, New Mexico chili powder derives from the New Mexican Chile, which was first

grown by the Pueblo and other Hispanic groups throughout the state of New Mexico. The New Mexico chili grows from a green pepper to a ripened red, and while the flavor is retained, the heat mellows in the drying process. There are many different strains of the New Mexico chili, but allegedly the most prized peppers are grown in the Hatch Valley area along the Rio Grande.



Street Taco Chicken Thighs

(Serves 6)

INGREDIENTS

10-12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 recipe taco rub (recipe below)
1/4 cup olive oil
1 large yellow onion coarsely chopped
1 cup chicken broth
2 tbsp. fresh squeezed lime juice
12 tortillas
1 cup grated mixed Mexican cheese, or crumbled feta, or Cotija cheese
Garnishes: guacamole, shredded cabbage, diced jalapeños, cilantro leaves, diced tomatoes, sliced radishes, shredded cheese, feta cheese, lime wedge and salsa
Taco Meat Rub
2 tsp. ground cumin
2 tsp. New Mexico chili powder
2 tsp. Himalayan pink salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 250 F. Get a Dutch oven or cast-iron pot with a tight-fitting lid ready. You will cook the chicken in this pot.

Rub chicken thighs, top and bottom, with half of the taco meat rub. Heat oil, a little bit at a time, and sauté onions until translucent. Sprinkle 1-2 tsp. of the rub over onions and continue to cook for another two minutes. Remove onions from pan and place in the Dutch oven. Set aside.

Heat more oil in the pan, and working in batches, brown the chicken thighs on both sides until very aromatic and golden brown. Remove thighs and place on top of the onions in the Dutch oven. Add about 1 cup of water to the frying pan to deglaze, scraping up any bits of chicken, onions, and spices. Pour the deglazed pan scrapings, along with the chicken broth and lime juice over the top, cover and bake for 2 1/2 hours, or until very tender. Remove from oven and cool enough to handle.

Using two forks, shred the chicken and put the shredded chicken back into the broth that is still in the Dutch oven. Cover and refrigerate until ready to heat and serve.

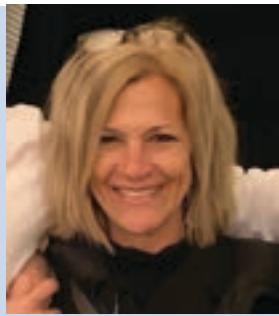
This step can be done several days ahead of time, and in fact, the chicken is even better if it has a couple of days to sit back in the juices.

When ready to serve, reheat chicken in the Dutch oven at about 300 F for 30 minutes or so. Heat tortillas in the oven, on a cast iron pan or over the grill. Serve with shredded chicken thighs, grated cheese and top with all of the garnishes you love to have with your tacos!



Rachael’s Good Eats <https://rachaelsgooddeats.com/>

Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



Is there a future doctor in the house?

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

One of the most critical decisions you can make as a high school student is selecting the college that will best support your goals. If you have your eye on becoming a doctor, knowing what medical schools look for will help guide this decision.

For medical school admissions, earning a high GPA, especially in medical school prerequisite coursework, is much more important than attending a “brand-name” school. It is imperative that pre-med students get strong grades in the 5-6 prerequisite courses for medical school, including organic chemistry, a notorious “weed out” course for premed students. Generally, large public research universities do not have as many personalized resources, like professor office hours and

pre-med advising staff available to help students to succeed. They also tend to have much larger class sizes and often a tougher grading scale. It is important to realize that medical schools do not take the selectivity of the college nor its academic reputation into account – in terms of quantitative assessment, they evaluate the Math/Science GPA and Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores, which the prerequisite coursework prepares the student to take.

Since the screening process for medical admissions does not take into consideration the rigor of the undergraduate program or how difficult it is to earn a high GPA, it can be said that MCAT scores are used to “validate” a student’s GPA. For example, a high GPA from a lesser-known or highly recognized school is affirmed when a student scores well on the MCAT. It proves that the applicant

knows the subject matter well and their academic success is not limited to the confines of undergraduate coursework. Contrarily, if a student with a high GPA scores poorly on the MCAT, the low score is a red flag to medical schools.

As such, medical school applicants must take the MCAT very seriously and aim to score well. Unlike standardized tests for college admissions, it is not wise to plan to take the MCAT multiple times. My advice is to take the required coursework, set aside 16 weeks for focused study, and get your best score the first time. I only recommend retesting if a) you are certain you can achieve a higher score, or b) you have older scores that schools you want to apply to will not accept.

When selecting a college to attend, high school students must take into consideration other important pre-med requirements. For example, if

research opportunities are reserved for graduate students, as they often are in public research universities, then undergraduates may have a critical gap on their resume. Further, some admissions advisors focus their support on applicants who excel in the early pre-med coursework at their institution. They may counsel (directly or less directly) lower achieving students to consider a different health profession or aim for a research career. Be sure you have the support you need and the resources you require to assemble a strong profile. Ranked ordered, the main factors are grades in pre-med coursework, complimentary MCAT scores, sufficient clinical experience, a strong record of volunteerism and some research involvement.

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Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the US. Elizabeth attends conferences, visits campuses and makes personal contacts with admissions networks to stay current on the evolving nature of college admissions. She and her professional team offer resume development, test preparation, academic tutoring, value analysis, merit and need-based scholarship search and more.

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