

CARNE ASADA TAQUITOS OR TACOS

4 servings

Carne asada is Spanish for “roasted or barbecued meat,” but in some parts of Mexico it is also the name given to a particular dish. What they all have in common is the way the meat is sliced. My friend Ana taught me this fast way to make carne asada tacos or taquitos and also how to shop at the Mexican market, where I buy the ranchera or flap meat. (More recently I have found carne asada meat at gourmet food stores as well.) I love the way it is prepared—as thin slabs marinated in lime juice and other seasonings.

CAN DO AHEAD

This dish may be put together ahead of time through step 4.

1½ pounds marinated ranchera or flap meat (see Note)
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 medium onion, diced
 3 garlic cloves, minced, divided
 4 chiles verde (Anaheim chiles)
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 12 mini corn tortillas (at the Mexican Market), or 8 standard corn tortillas (for homemade, see p. 108)
 Fresh lime wedges

1. Slice ranchera or flap meat across the grain into 1/2-inch-wide strips. If using flank or skirt steak, first slice it very thinly and then cut it into 1/2-inch-wide strips. Put the meat into a skillet with just enough water to cover. Sprinkle with the 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium-low and cook for about 6 minutes. Add the onion and two of the minced garlic cloves. Add water as necessary to keep the meat and onion barely covered. Continue to simmer until the meat is very tender, about 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, put the chiles in a saucepan and add water to about half full. Bring to a boil and cook until the chiles are very tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Add hot water as necessary to keep the water level about the same. Remove the chiles to a cutting board, reserving the water. Set aside.
3. When the meat is very tender, continue to cook, allowing the water to evaporate. When the water is almost gone, remove the meat to a small platter and cover to keep warm or place in a warm oven until serving time.
4. Cut the chiles in half lengthwise and then in thirds, discarding the stems, and puree in the blender or food processor with the remaining minced garlic. The chiles are likely to have retained enough water from boiling to make a creamy sauce, although you may need to add a small amount of the reserved chile water. Add the 1/4 teaspoon salt to taste. Spoon the sauce into a small serving bowl.
5. Heat the tortillas, one at a time, in a small skillet over high heat. Heat each one for a few seconds, flip it over, and heat the other side. Stack the heated tortillas on a plate or in a cloth-lined basket.

Place the tortillas, the meat, the chile sauce, and the lime wedges on the table and let everyone prepare their own taquito by placing the meat and chili sauce inside the tortilla and rolling it up. Or fold over and eat like a taco. You may also serve with chopped fresh tomato and sour cream.

These are delicious served alone, although you may add **Mexican Beans & Rice** (p. 122) as a side dish.

Note: If you can't find marinated carne asada meat near you, then substitute flank or skirt steak and marinate it yourself in a bottled lime marinade, or mix a simple marinade of lime juice, cumin, chili powder, coarse salt, and minced garlic. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.