

Fish Tacos

By **Sam Sifton**

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Total Time 30 minutes

Rating ★★★★★ (7,637)



Craig Lee for The New York Times

Fish tacos, that great meal of the Baja Peninsula, and a taste of summer. They are simple to make, no more complicated in fact than a hamburger or a mess of pancakes, and they are considerably more flavorful. Fried in strips and served onboard warm corn tortillas with a simple salsa, a pinch of fresh cabbage, plenty of lime and a cream sauce you might want to punch up with some chopped chipotle, these fish tacos can turn a cold night into bluebird summer, transporting you from chill into deep humidity and bliss.

Why You Should Trust This Recipe

Sam Sifton, the founding editor of New York Times Cooking and an avid fisherman, created this version of fish tacos after spending time with a chef who specializes in fish. Sam also took inspiration for this dish from the delicious version at El Siete Mares on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles before it closed in 2020.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

2 medium tomatoes, seeded and finely chopped

1 small red onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

½ cup roughly chopped cilantro

1 jalapeño, halved lengthwise, seeded and cut crosswise into half moons (optional)

¼ cup mayonnaise

½ cup sour cream

PREPARATION

Step 1

In a medium bowl, combine the tomatoes, onion, garlic, cilantro and jalapeño (if using).

Step 2

In a small bowl, whisk the mayonnaise and sour cream until combined. Season to taste with the halved lime, salt, pepper and chipotle (if using).

Step 3

In a medium bowl, mix together the flour, chili powder and 1½ teaspoons each of kosher salt and black pepper. Pour the milk into another medium bowl, and place the fish into it.

2 limes, 1 halved and 1 cut into wedges

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon canned chipotle pepper, finely chopped (optional)

½ cup flour, preferably Wondra or other fine-milled flour

1½ teaspoons chili powder

½ cup milk

¼ cup peanut oil, plus a splash more for greasing pan

Pat of butter

1 pound flounder or any firm white-fleshed fish, cut across the grain of the flesh into strips about ½ inch wide by 3 inches long

12 6-inch fresh corn tortillas

2 cups shredded green cabbage

A saucy hot sauce, like Tapatio or Frank's

Step 4

Pour ¼ cup of the peanut oil into a 12-inch frying pan and place over medium-high heat until it shimmers and is about to smoke.

Remove the fish pieces from the milk bath and dredge them lightly through the flour mixture, shaking to remove excess. Add the butter to the pan. Place some fish pieces in the oil, without crowding them, and cook until deep golden brown on one side, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn carefully and cook for 1 minute more. Remove to a warmed, paper-towel-lined plate and sprinkle with salt.

Repeat with the remaining fish.

Step 5

Meanwhile, lightly grease a skillet with a drizzle of oil and set over medium heat. Heat the tortillas, one or two at a time, until they are soft and hot. Keep them warm, wrapped in a dish towel.

Step 6

Fill each tortilla with 3 pieces of fish, browned side up, followed by tomato salsa and a pinch of cabbage. Drizzle with the cream sauce. Serve 2 to 3 tacos per person, with lime wedges and hot sauce on the side.