

## TACOS DE MARISCOS EMPANIZADOS CON AÏOLI DE CHIPOTLE

### FRIED FISH TACOS WITH CHIPOTLE AÏOLI

In the ancient Maya world, only those who lived in coastal areas had ready access to fish. Inland, fish was a luxury of the rich, since the cooking or salting that it required for transport made it too expensive for ordinary folk.

Nowadays, seafood is enjoyed by all—in larger towns as well as in tiny fishing villages like Celestun, Progreso or Sisal. Strung all along their lazy beaches are dozens of thatched huts that lure you into the comforting shade for a refreshing beer or margarita and a feast of fresh fruits of the sea. While all such places are delicious, the old refrain “twenty restaurants, one kitchen” that pertains to New York’s Chinese and Indian fare also applies here. You can have your fish any way you like it, as long as it is cooked in garlic butter, or breaded and fried, or grilled. Choose your fish, choose your cooking method, and place your order! Usually, diners scoop small pieces of the fish onto a *tortilla* for a make-it-yourself *taco*. A local favorite is *Mariscos Empanizados* or *Camarones Empanizados* (breaded mixed seafood or breaded shrimp). A rainbow of *salsas* is provided on the side, and diners are free to experiment with their own flavor and heat combinations. A particularly unusual but popular condiment relatively new to the scene is mayonnaise. Yucatecans have taken to it with gusto and now spoon it onto everything from meats to corn on the cob. Its tangy creaminess also goes well with many seafood dishes, especially fried fish. For this recipe, we have switched the mayonnaise (which is usually commercially prepared!) for a homemade *aïoli*. This makes sense due to *aïoli*’s Spanish heritage. Although France claims *aïoli* as its own, the first record of anything similar links it to Spain. Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79), a Roman living on Spain’s Catalan coast, reported: “When garlic is beaten up in oil and vinegar it swells up in foam to a surprising size.” In Catalan, it is spelled *allioli* which means simply “garlic and oil”, and indeed the most authentic recipes are just that. Here, we have added egg yolks to speed up the emulsion process, and finally a Mexican touch: a smoky *chipotle* chile.

10 SERVINGS

#### ✦ MAKE THE AÏOLI ✦

- 4 large garlic cloves, *peeled*
  - 3 egg yolks at room temperature
  - 1 teaspoon (5ml) dry mustard
  - 1/4 teaspoon (1.25ml) salt
  - 1/4 teaspoon (1.25ml) white pepper
- 
- 1 cup (250ml) olive oil at room temperature
  - 1 1/2 tablespoons (22ml) fresh lime juice
  - 1 *chile chipotle en adobo*, *drained*

**STEP 1 WHISK YOLKS BY HAND** until pale yellow and creamy. Transfer to a blender jar and add other ingredients; cover and process at medium speed for 2 minutes.

**STEP 2 WITH BLENDER STILL OPERATING**, remove the cover and slowly pour in a quarter of the oil in a very thin stream. Patience at this task imperative. Pause to scrape down the sides of the jar, then blend for 1 minute. Continue with the remaining oil, adding it as slowly as possible, and periodically scraping down the jar. Repeat. When all the oil has been incorporated, the *aïoli* should be thick and creamy. (If the mixture separates, remove from blender jar, place 1 or 2 beaten egg yolks into the jar, and slowly pour the previous mixture in with the blender at high speed.) At this point, uncover with motor running and slowly add the lime juice. Finally, add the *chipotle* chile and process until thoroughly blended. Chill until ready to serve.

## TACOS DE MARISCOS EMPANIZADOS CON AÏOLI DE CHIPOTLE (CONTINUED)

- **1/8 tsp. (.625ml) each paprika, cinnamon, cardamom and ginger**
- **1/4 tsp. (1.25ml) each ground bay leaf, allspice, cloves, cayenne**
- **1/2 tsp. (2.5ml) each ground coriander, black pepper, dry mustard**
- **1 Tbs. (15ml) celery salt**

- **2 cups (500ml) buttermilk**  
*(Substitute: 2 cups/500ml whole milk mixed with 3 Tbs. /45ml white vinegar)*
- **3/4 lb. (340g) raw shrimp, peeled, deveined, tails removed and butterflied**
- **3/4 lb. (340g) mild white fish fillet (tilapia, grouper), cut across the grain into strips approximately 1 inch (3cm) wide by 3 inches (8cm) long**
- **3/4 lb. (340g) squid, cleaned and cut into ringlets**
- **1 cup (145g) all-purpose flour**

- **1 quart (1 liter) vegetable oil**
- **Kosher salt to taste**

- **1 lb. (.5 kilo) warm corn tortillas**
- **1 head bibb lettuce, washed and separated into small leaves**
- **2 ripe avocados, peeled, seeded and sliced lengthwise**
- **4 limes, cut into wedges**
- **1 recipe *Salpicón* (optional)**

---

### ⇨ MAKE THE SEAFOOD RECADO ⇨

---

**STEP 3 MIX THE SPICES TOGETHER** and place in a re-sealable plastic bag or airtight container until ready for use.

---

### ⇨ PREPARE THE SEAFOOD ⇨

---

**STEP 4 IF USING THE BUTTERMILK SUBSTITUTE**, mix the milk with the vinegar and allow to stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Place either the real or the substitute buttermilk in a large non-reactive bowl and add the fish pieces.

---

**STEP 5 IN A RE-SEALABLE PLASTIC BAG**, place the flour and 1 Tbs. (15ml) of the seafood *recado* reserving the rest for future use. Shake to mix well.

---

**STEP 6 LIFT SEAFOOD FROM THE BUTTERMILK** and shake to remove excess. Place the fish in the bag with the flour and toss to coat.

---

**STEP 7 IN A LARGE, DEEP SKILLET**, heat the oil until very hot but not smoking. Working in batches so as not to overcrowd, remove the fish from the bag and fry, turning once, until golden brown and thoroughly cooked, approximately 4 minutes. Transfer to a rack or paper towels to drain. Sprinkle with salt to taste.

---

### ⇨ SERVE ⇨

---

**STEP 8 INVITE DINERS** to place a leaf of lettuce on a *tortilla*, then some of the fish, a slice of avocado and finally the *aïoli* and *Salpicón* if desired. Squeeze on fresh lime juice to taste.