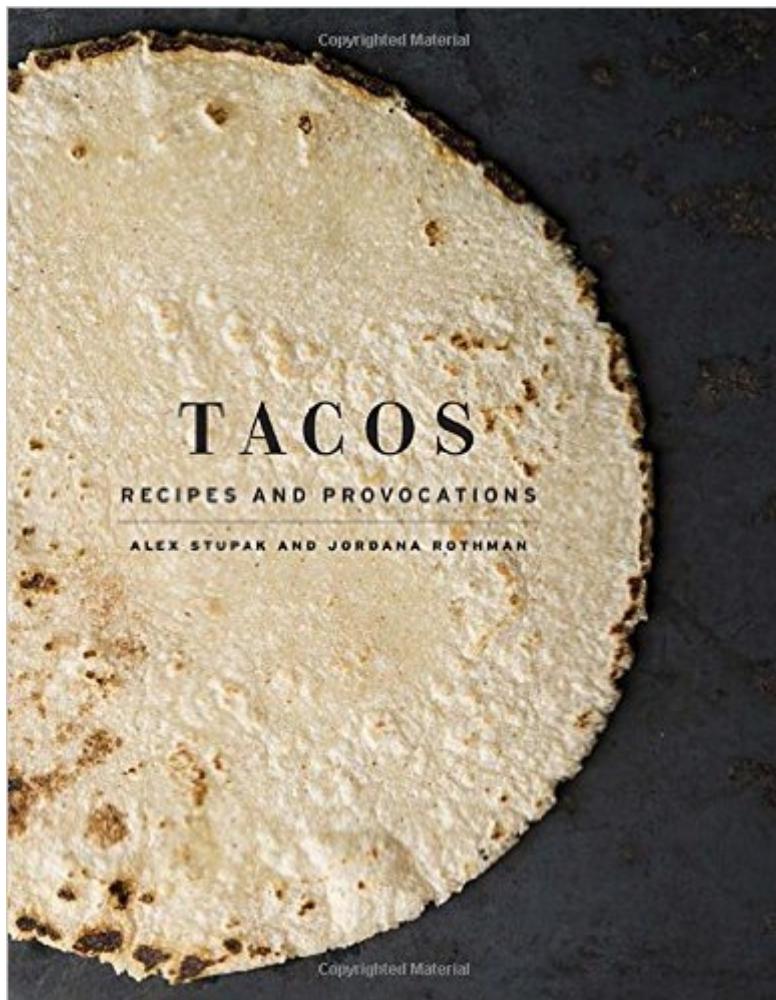


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# Tacos: Recipes And Provocations



## Synopsis

Superstar chef Alex Stupak's love of real Mexican food changed his life; it caused him to quit the world of fine-dining pastry and open the smash-hit Empellón Taqueria in New York City. Now he'll change the way you make--and think about--tacos forever. *TACOS* is a deep dive into the art and craft of one of Mexico's greatest culinary exports. We start by making fresh tortillas from corn and flour, and variations that look to innovative grains and flavor infusions. Next we master salsas, from simple chopped condiments to complex moles that simmer for hours and have flavor for days. Finally we explore fillings, both traditional and modern--from a pineapple-topped pork al pastor to pastrami with mustard seeds. But *TACOS* is more than a collection of beautiful things to cook. Wrapped up within it is an argument: Through these recipes, essays, and sumptuous photographs by Evan Sung, the 3-Michelin-star veteran makes the case that Mexican food should be as esteemed as the highest French cooking.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This taco cookbook is a unapologetic and bold collection of inspirational recipes for making unique taco dishes. There are some really interesting recipes in this book. This book is also not for the "casual" or traditional taco maker as the recipes are likely not what you are expecting. The tone of the recipes is set in the first half of the book which gives a brief background on Alex Stupak and his culinary journey, some fundamentals on spices and chilies, and then a pretty lengthy explanation on the type of corn that best lends itself to tortillas, tortilla recipes, and salsa recipes. Thoughtfully, the tortilla recipes give you the ingredient option of easier to find masa harina (as well as the harder to

find fresh masa). In addition to corn and flour tortillas recipes, there are some creative fusion recipes such as pistachio, saffron, and rye tortillas. The subsequent dedication to salsa recipes emphasizes the wide variety of ways a salsa can create a completely different taste and look to a taco. The second half of the book is dedicated to taco recipes. While the opening notes suggest that some of the recipes are classics, I tend to disagree. That being said, the recipes are pretty cool. Some examples of recipes include Chicken Tacos with Kale and Salsa Verde, Skirt Steak Tacos, Fried Oyster Tacos, Pineapple Tacos, and Wild Spinach Tacos. There are also a few taco recipes that would lend themselves to breakfast as well as a couple of dessert taco recipes. The closing section has recipes for components (such as Adobo paste) that are used in some of the recipes. The writing tone of this book is very down to earth and lightly humorous.

This is a book by a white guy with fancy chef credentials from multiple Michelin-starred restaurants, who then went on to open fancy taco restaurants in Manhattan. And a white girl food writer from Brooklyn. With photos by a Manhattan photographer. New York City is not known for tacos. If that matters to you, then this book is not for you. This isn't a book about "authentic" Mexican tacos. Instead, it's a book that holds up the humble tortilla in the true light it deserves. Stupak understands that the most critical part of a taco is the quality of the tortilla. You will never have a superb taco with packaged tortillas. It needs to be made with fresh masa, shaped by hand and cooked seconds before it's inhaled. Pages are devoted to the process of nixtamalization of corn and to ways of grinding it to masa. Alas, Stupak says that one can only make proper masa for tortillas using an industrial machine, so it is inaccessible to most folks. Maybe you live in a city that has a tortilleria that sells fresh masa. Or perhaps us home cooks can get lucky with a metate, or a wet grinder as is used in Indian homes to grind rice and lentils into batter for dosas. If not, there's always masa harina, the dried masa flour that requires us to just add water. While far from fresh masa, masa harina still produces superior tortillas than most U.S. taquerias serve up. To all the wheat flour tortilla lovers, don't worry, also included is a recipe for making those, with lard. And to those who love non-traditional ingredients, we also get tortillas using rye, buckwheat, yuca, beet, pistachios and even chorizo (yes, in the dough). Next up are salsas, the "coup de grÃ¢ce" of taco making, according to the authors.

What a great month it's been for lovers of the taco - first the fun, hip, irreverent love letter to Mexican taco culture that was Tacopedia, and now this intense, punk-rock manifesto of the taco as high cuisine. Tacos: Recipes and Provocations delivers on both halves of its subtitle, in spades. His

recipes range from the traditional to the avant-garde, with a strong core of fundamental respect for the cuisine, its techniques, and its multicultural and evolving spirit. His provocations will rattle the cage of many a pretentious foodie who'd prefer to see Mexican cuisine frozen in time and served for under \$5. The first half or so of the book centers on fundamentals: tortillas and salsas. Stupak is uncompromising here: fresh tortillas, or nothing. I tend to agree. He walks the reader through nixtamalizing corn, grinding it for masa, and pressing tortillas, including instructions on storage and on starting with masa preparada. Of note here is the range of flavored and amended tortillas, enriched by obvious (spinach, spices) and nonobvious (chorizo?!) additions, which have a long history in Mexico. He also has a pretty good flour tortilla recipe. The salsas are phenomenal. I made two of the salsas last night, and found them to be mindblowing - well balanced, intense, and unusual. I especially recommend the salsa macha, which reminded me of a cross between a pipian and buffalo wing sauce. My wife, who was born and raised in the DF, is ecstatic. Recipes range from old favorites (carnitas, al pastor, barbacoa) to high-concept rethinks (pineapple tacos with lardo, pastrami with mustard seed salsa, sea urchin and guacamole).

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