



'The Meat-Free Mexican One'

Thomasina Miers | May 2023

Meat-Free Mexican: 3 Flavour-Packed Vegetarian Recipes



How to Make... Blistered Green Bean Tacos with Tomato Pico and Toasted Almonds

Blistered Green Bean Tacos with Tomato Pico and Toasted Almonds

Serves 4

Thomasina says: “I had a taco stuffed with sautéed green beans several years ago in a tiny Mexican restaurant in Barcelona. It felt like such a simple idea – to stuff a warm tortilla with an ingredient that for me is so quintessentially British. I can still remember the delight I felt as a child when surreptitiously snapping them off the plants in my aunt’s garden in Wales, where we would go for the summer holidays. Try this in the summer when both the green beans and the tomatoes are at their best: runner beans, griddled flat beans or sugar snaps will all taste good.”



How to Make... Blistered Green Bean Tacos with Tomato Pico and Toasted Almonds

Ingredients

- 75g flaked almonds
- 500g green beans, topped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- 3 tbsp capers (the bigger the better)
- 3 tbsp corn or flour tortillas
- sea salt

To serve

- Fresh tomato pico (see below!)
- crumbled feta (optional)
- sliced avocado (optional)





How to Make... Blistered Green Bean Tacos with Tomato Pico and Toasted Almonds

Method

- Put your largest frying pan over a medium heat and when hot, toast the almonds, shaking the pan until they are mostly a lighter shade of caramel. Put aside to cool.
- Turn the heat up under the pan and add the beans in two batches. Sauté each batch for four to five minutes until they are looking a little blackened all over and starting to blister. Season with sea salt and remove from the pan into a warm bowl. Now pour in the olive oil and add the garlic and drained capers (watch for spitting if they are still a little wet). Cook for a couple of minutes or so until the garlic is golden and empty onto the beans.
- Warm the tortillas in a pan, over a flame or in the microwave and wrap in a dish towel to keep hot.
- Pile the beans into the tortillas and top with the garlic and capers, spooning over heaped spoonfuls of the tomato salsa. Sprinkle with the almonds and crumbled feta and avocado, if using, then munch with gusto.



How to Make... Fresh Tomato Pico

Fresh Tomato Pico

Makes a large bowl!

“This salsa, the classic pico de gallo, is fresh, citrusy and delicious, especially when made with great tomatoes. Not only does it look good sprinkled over dishes, glistening with the oil and lime, but it adds sparkling acidity to anything you ladle it on. Make it all summer when tomatoes are blooming, or with those wonderful winter varieties, keeping them outside the fridge to maintain their sweet, delicate flavour.”



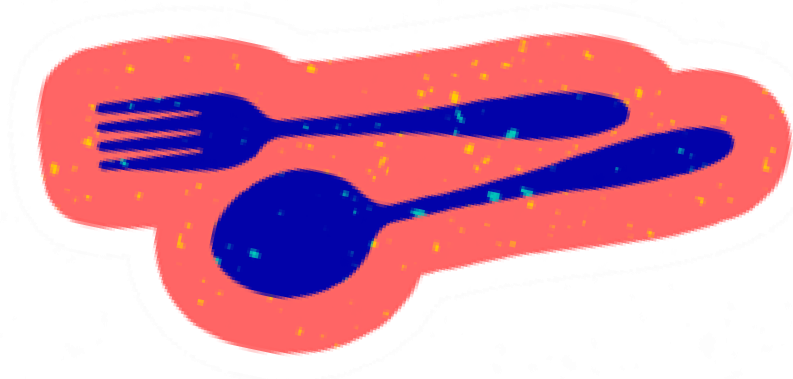
How to Make... Fresh Tomato Pico

Ingredients

- 6 very ripe plum or cherry tomatoes
- small handful of coriander
- 1 small red onion, very finely diced
- 1–2 green chillies, preferably jalapeños, very finely chopped
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- juice of 1–2 limes
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp soft brown sugar
- salt and pepper

Method

- Cut the tomatoes into quarters and scoop out the watery insides (you can keep them and use them in a vinaigrette or in a soup). Dice the flesh.
- Roughly chop the coriander leaves and finely chop the stalks and stir into the tomatoes with the onion, chillies, oil, half the lime juice, the salt and sugar. Check the flavour and add more salt, pepper or lime juice if you think the salsa needs it. Leave to marinate for at least 20 minutes before you are ready to eat.





How to Make... Baked Polenta with Veracruzán Sauce and Sautéed Greens

Baked Polenta with Veracruzán Sauce and Sautéed Greens

Serves 6

Thomasina says: “This bewitching, silkily rich tomato sauce comes from Veracruz, where Cortés first landed to discover the Americas. At that time the Spanish were also occupying Sicily, so traders brought capers and olives to Mexico and returned laden with cacao, tomatoes and gold. A classic Veracruzán sauce is thus spiked with olives and capers. You can use pickled jalapeños here, but I find pickled Spanish guindillas or pickled Turkish chillies also have great spice and character.”



How to Make... Baked Polenta with Veracruzán Sauce and Sautéed Greens

Ingredients

- 250g coarse polenta
- 1.2 litres water or vegetable stock
- 3 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- small handful of chopped parsley
- vegetarian Parmesan or pecorino or vegan cheese, finely grated (optional)
- 3 large handfuls of greens (chard, spinach, kale), de-stemmed
- salt and pepper

For the sauce:

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large Spanish onion, finely sliced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery sticks, diced
- 1/2 head of garlic, cloves peeled and sliced
- handful of oregano leaves or thyme
- 2–3 bay leaves
- 100ml manzanilla sherry
- 80g good-quality green olives, pitted and roughly chopped
- 40g capers, roughly chopped
- 60g pickled chillies, sliced, plus extra to serve
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 1.2kg ripe red tomatoes or 3 x 400g tins of plum tomatoes





How to Make... Baked Polenta with Veracruzán Sauce and Sautéed Greens

Method

- Line a 20 x 30cm (8 x 12 inch) baking tin or dish with cling film and set aside. Put the polenta in a pan with the water or stock and season well. Cook according to the packet instructions, adding more liquid if needed so it can be poured into the tin. Once cooked, immediately stir in 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, the parsley, lots of salt and pepper, to taste. Pour into the lined dish, smooth the surface and set aside to cool. You can do this up to two days ahead – just cover and store in the fridge.
- Meanwhile, to make the sauce, heat a large casserole dish over a medium–high heat and after a few minutes, add the oil and lower the heat to medium. Add the onion, carrot and celery, season well with salt and pepper and cook for eight to 10 minutes until soft. Add all but two cloves of the garlic, the oregano and bay leaves, stir and cook for another three to four minutes. Finally, add the sherry, olives, capers, pickled chillies, cinnamon, sugar and tomatoes, pour in 250ml water and bring up to simmering point. Taste, adjust the seasoning and cook slowly for 30 minutes.
- When you are ready to eat, preheat a hot grill to medium and slice the polenta into long triangles. Drizzle with oil, sprinkle with grated cheese, if using, and grill for 10 minutes until golden on top and heated through.
- While the polenta is grilling, warm the remaining olive oil in a wide, deep frying pan and sauté the last of the garlic until pale golden. Stir in the greens and cook for a minute, then add two to three tablespoons of water and cover. Steam-fry for four to five minutes until tender.
- Serve the polenta with the tomato sauce and greens, scattered with the pickled chillies.



How to Make... Beetroot Ceviche with Tarragon, Blood Orange and Avocado 'Crema'

Beetroot Ceviche with Tarragon, Blood Orange and Avocado 'Crema'

Serves 6

Thomasina says: "As it becomes increasingly apparent how much we have overfished the oceans and how much care we need to take if we are to eat any fish at all in the future, I have started to look for ways to avoid eating it. 'Ceviche-ing' beautiful vegetables, at the peak of their season has become a favourite in my Mexican feasts. If blood oranges are not in season, use a normal one."



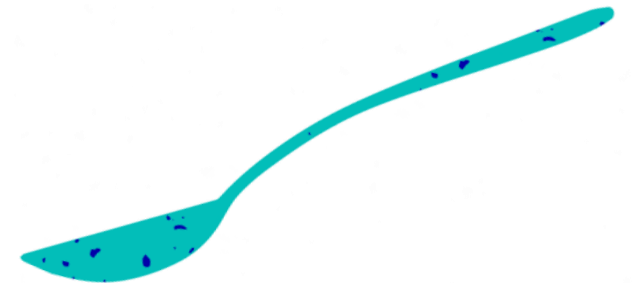
How to Make... Beetroot Ceviche with Tarragon, Blood Orange and Avocado 'Crema'

Ingredients

- 4 medium beetroot
- 2 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 30g sunflower seeds
- 1 avocado
- 1 1/2 tbsp lime juice
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander stalks plus small handful of roughly chopped coriander leaves
- 3 radishes
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped
- small handful of roughly chopped tarragon leaves
- fine sea salt
- cress or pea shoots, to garnish
- Tostadas (optional, see below)

For the dressing:

- 1 Scotch bonnet chilli (or a bird's eye)
- 1 small garlic clove, unpeeled
- 1/4 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- 2 tbsp lime juice
- 7 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- juice of 1/2 orange (blood or otherwise)
- salt





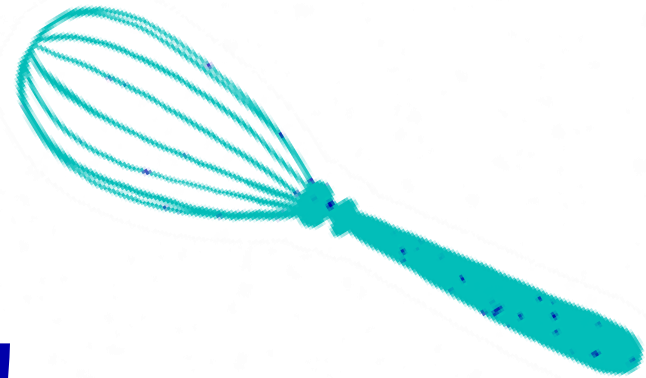
How to Make... Beetroot Ceviche with Tarragon, Blood Orange and Avocado 'Crema'

Method

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan.
- Rub the beetroot with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, followed by a little fine sea salt, pop into a baking tin and cover with foil. Roast for one hour or until tender when pierced with a knife.
- Toast the sunflower seeds in a dry frying pan until golden. Remove and set aside. Meanwhile, to make the dressing, put the chilli and garlic in the dry frying pan over a medium-high heat and toast on both sides until blackened all over, about five to seven minutes. Toast the cumin seeds for 30 seconds in the same pan. De-seed the chilli, cut into quarters and peel the garlic. Pound a quarter of the chilli to a paste in a pestle with the garlic and several pinches of salt, the cumin and the sugar. Work in the lime juice and finally pour in the olive oil and orange juice and stir to combine.
- Blitz the avocado with the lime juice, 1 1/2 tablespoons of water and the remaining oil. Add the coriander stalks and two to three large pinches of salt and blitz again to a smooth, thick cream.
- When the beetroot is cooked, allow to cool for five minutes, then pop on a pair of washing-up gloves and rub away the beetroots' skin. Slice into rounds about 3mm, preferably with a mandolin.
- Arrange them in overlapping circles on a large serving plate and dress with the dressing while still warm. Slice the radishes to paper-thin discs (use the mandolin if you have it). Scatter over the spring onions, coriander and tarragon leaves and the seeds and dot with the avocado cream. Serve at once with the cress or pea shoots and the tostadas, if making.



How to Make... Tostadas



Tostadas!

A tostada is a crisp fried tortilla that, rather like a crispbread, provides the perfect base for a range of delicious Mexican toppings. They are a wonderful addition to a summery spread of Mexican tapas, otherwise known as antojitos In Mexico!

Frying stale tortillas, rather than fresh, will give you a crunchier tostada as they will absorb less oil.

Warm a couple of centimetres of oil in a frying pan and individually fry small corn tortillas for approx. 30 seconds on each side until golden and crisp, then drain on kitchen paper.

Alternatively, dry-toast fresh tortillas in a dry frying pan until black in spots and brittle. Tostadas like these need to be served at once, or they will turn chewy.

I also make tostadas from pitta breads when I can't get hold of corn tortillas. Just use a ring cutter, cut out the size you want, brush with vegetable oil and bake in a 180°C/160°C fan oven for four to five minutes until golden and crisp.