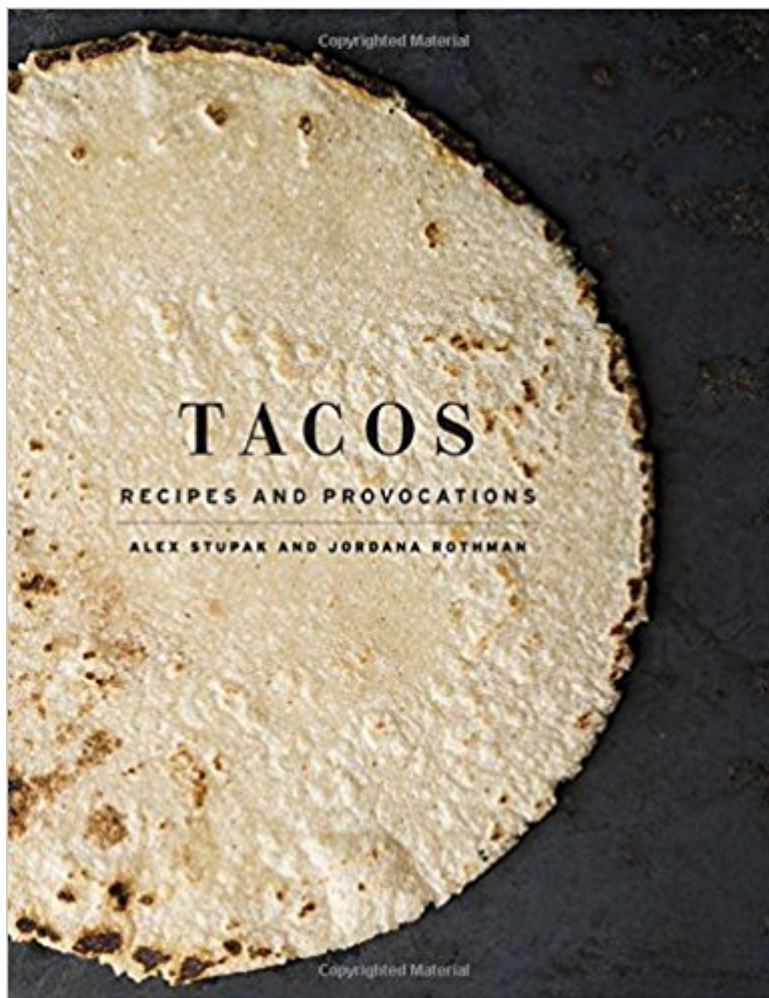


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# Tacos: Recipes And Provocations



## 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. Start by making fresh tortillas from corn and flour, and variations that look to innovative grains and flavor infusions. Next, master salsas, from simple chopped condiments to complex moles that simmer for hours and have flavor for days. Finally, 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

Alex Stupak earned recognition as one of the world's most innovative pastry chefs while leading teams at progressive cuisine icons Clio, Alinea, and wd-50. But innovation only counts, he figured, if you push yourself out of your comfort zone, and so he left that world to cook Mexican food, a cuisine that captured his head and his heart. His restaurant Empellón Cocina earned him a James Beard nomination for Best New Restaurant in the country, and *Food & Wine* magazine named him a Best New Chef in 2013. Jordana Rothman is a veteran of Time Out New York, where she held

the reins as the magazine's Food & Drink editor for six years. She's a respected member of the national food writing community and a frequent contributor to print and digital publications such as Food & Wine, Bon Appétit, New York Magazine, Cherry Bombe, MadFeed, Grub Street and Conde Nast Traveler.

Delicious and creative! Taco heads need this! Stupak's focus is on the tortilla, and he has some very interesting variations: saffron, beet, pistachio, chicken, etc. Pictured below: 1-2) I went straight for an unusual one, the Scallop Tacos JGV - p170 in Corn Tortillas - p35, and everyone loved them. Scallops and cauliflower with a caper raisin emulsion. Outstanding flavor! 3) Mashed Pea Tacos with Parmesan Cheese - p196 in Beet Tortillas - p46. These were so delicious and unusual! The only modification I'd make is to reserve 3/4 of the pea/parm mixture before blending the reconstituted peppers in to keep that beautiful bright green color. 4-5) Skirt Steak Tacos - p115 with Mojo De Ajo - p224 and Salsa Arriera - p61 in Flour Tortillas - p41. These were amazing tacos! Delicious and super easy. I was tempted to cut the Salsa Arriera recipe in half, thinking 15 serrano peppers would be a lot. I'm so glad I didn't because we used almost all of it. No sweat if you don't have a molcajete - you could blend or food process it. 6) Cochinita Pibil Tacos - p141 with Pickled Red Onions - p232 and Salsa Habanera - p62 on Flour Tortillas - p41. Absolute knockout! The pork cooks in an Achiote Paste - p224 and gets all tucked into banana leaves. It just falls apart and that killer flavor penetrates the whole thing. Don't rub your eyes when you make that salsa. Ask me how I know. ;) He gives two methods, pork shoulder in banana leaves in a Dutch oven in the oven, or the full pig in banana leaves cooked in a pit dug in the ground. I went with the oven. Neat stuff! There are beautiful color photos of most dishes. If you need a tortilla press, the Victoria 8 inch Cast Iron Tortilla Press and Pataconera, Original Made in Colombia, Seasoned works beautifully. You can use it for tostones, too, if you only press partially.

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. There are really nice photos throughout the book mostly showing plating of the final dishes but some showing steps along the way. Pretty much all of the recipes require advance planning and preparation. They do not lend themselves to throwing together on the spur of the moment. I recommend this cookbook to fans of Alex Stupak and foodies who enjoy innovative spins on traditional recipes.

This is an excellent book. The author, Alex Stupak, runs an outstanding Mexican restaurant that treats the ingredients in such a way as to produce top quality Mexican food. Alex compares and contrasts traditional Mexican cooking with what his recipes are doing. In several cases he has a New England twist to his recipes, but before giving any recipe, he talks about its inspiration and its origins in Mexican cuisine. If you don't like how he has changed the recipes, then he gives enough information to reverse engineer a more "Mexican" version of the recipe. Many claim that his recipes are not authentic, but he argues that Mexican cuisine is a continually evolving animal and not a fixed set of dishes. The techniques Alex has laid out in the book make it worth the humble price of \$20 (as of 2017). Alex teaches you how to make corn tortillas at home, discusses the best ways of keeping them hot (they should not drop below 120 F), and then also discusses flour tortillas (which are not as sensitive as corn tortillas) and how to use masa harina. After the section on tortillas, Alex then moves on to describe the best ways to make Salsas (the pesto/curry of Mexican cuisine). He takes a very good educational perspective in that he builds from very simple salsa verdes up to making mole (one of the most complicated and time consuming sauces in all of cooking). Finally, the last section is all about Tacos! Page after page is full of stories and recipes about tacos and their development. I drool all over my book when I read it, and you probably will too. I've made several of the recipes in here. They are outstanding and fun projects. Just be prepared to spend a day (or several) to get to a good result. This is Tacos as haute cuisine. It's going to take some work and

failures before you get to something you like.

I had a chance to read through this tonight. The recipes are easy and the processes are very well explained. In addition to the traditional tacos you would expect to find, there are some slightly out of the box ideas... Black bean hummus tacos, baby carrot tacos, squash blossom tacos.... I am super excited to give these a whirl!

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