

Slow Cooker Carnitas

Makes: 10 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 6 hours

Southern Californians know a good taco when they see it, they can hold an avocado in their hands and know its exact moment of ripeness and they aren't afraid to eat things like carne asada and carnitas. I live in San Diego, you see—the land of really great Mexican food pretty much everywhere you look. “Carnitas” is just a big, fancy Spanish word for braised, roasted pork. It is my husband's absolute favorite Mexican dish. When cooked at a low heat for a long time, the pork shreds apart into tender chunks of meat that make a wonderful filling for tacos or burritos.

CARNITAS

3 pounds boneless country-style pork ribs or pork shoulder (Boston butt), cut into 1 ½-inch pieces

2 medium garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon dried oregano (preferably Mexican)

1 tablespoon ground cumin

2 teaspoons kosher salt

2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

1 large yellow onion, cut into wedges

FOR SERVING

20 corn tortillas, fried or warmed (see Tips)

Fresh cilantro, sliced red bell pepper, sliced avocado, sour cream, salsa, tomato, cheese and/or lime wedges

In a slow cooker, toss the pork with the garlic, oregano, cumin, salt and pepper. Place the onion wedges on top. Cover and cook on low heat for 6 to 8 hours, or until the pork is tender and pulls apart easily.

Just before serving, transfer the pork to a cutting board. Shred the pork with two forks, discarding any fat that remains. Scoop the shredded pork into a serving dish. Discard the onions from the juices in the slow cooker and drizzle the shredded pork with some of the juices.

To serve, fill tortillas with shredded pork and any desired condiments.

Gluten-Free Adaptable: Use a brand of tortillas that is known to be gluten-free.

Tips:

- To fry the tortillas, in a small skillet, heat $\frac{1}{3}$ cup canola or vegetable oil over medium heat. Fry the tortillas one at a time, about 10 seconds per side, and remove them to a paper towel-lined plate to drain, adding a paper towel in between each tortilla. To warm the tortillas, wrap a stack of 3 at a time in damp paper towels and microwave them until they are warmed and softened, 40 to 60 seconds. Alternatively, wrap them in foil with a few sprinkles of water and heat them in the oven at 350°F for 10 to 15 minutes, until they are warm and pliable.
- I like to set up a carnitas serve-yourself station. Display warmed tortillas, shredded pork and a variety of the suggested condiments. Let people create their own carnitas tacos.

Change It Up! Carnitas are also wonderful served inside a large flour tortilla as a burrito. Since burritos are much larger than tacos, I like to add steamed rice or Spanish rice as a filler along with the shredded pork and condiments.