

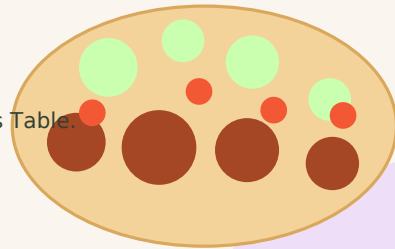
**DITO'S TABLE GUIDE**

# Taco Craft

A practical system for building tacos that taste bold, balanced and genuinely exciting - from proper tortillas and salsa magic to veggie, fish, chicken, birria and Mexi-terranean ideas.

**Proper Tortillas + Salsa Magic + The Flavour Matrix**

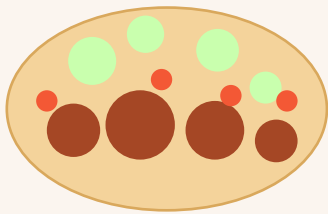
By Dito - restaurateur, chef, Mexican food obsessive and creator of Dito's Table.



# How to Use This Guide

This is not a list of random taco ideas. It is a way to think like a taco builder: tortilla first, filling with intention, salsa with purpose, and enough texture, fat, freshness and heat to make every bite work.

Taco Craft is the bridge between your Dito's Table taco articles and a reader-friendly system. The idea is simple: once you understand the architecture of a taco, you can create plant-based tacos, fish tacos, chicken tacos, birria-style tacos, tostadas and Mexi-terranean experiments without starting from zero every time.



## Taco Craft = a designed bite

### 1. Proper tortilla

warm, pliable, fragrant, not an afterthought

### 2. Filling identity

one clear flavour direction: tinga, pastor, ancho, baja, birria

### 3. Salsa logic

do you need smoke, acidity, heat, creaminess, or crunch?

### 4. Freshness + texture

onion, coriander, slaw, radish, pico, toasted seeds, crisp edges

### 5. Balance

nothing dominates; every bite has purpose

## Inside the guide

1. The Taco Craft System - the five moving parts of a great taco.
2. The Flavour Matrix - protein, fibre, fat, texture, heat, acid, freshness and balance.
3. Proper Tortillas - why the tortilla is part of flavour, not packaging.
4. Salsa Magic - how to choose a sauce rather than just add a sauce.
5. Taco Libraries - plant-based, fish, chicken, birria, al pastor and Mexi-terranean blueprints.
6. Troubleshooting - how to fix bland, soggy, soft, dry or confused tacos.
7. Taco Craft Worksheet - a repeatable planning page for your next taco idea.

### Core promise

**You do not need 40 ingredients. You need a clear taco idea and a few components that know their job.**

# 1. What Taco Craft Means

Taco Craft is the difference between putting food inside a tortilla and designing a proper bite.

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A taco can be humble or luxurious, fast or slow, plant-based or meaty. But the best ones follow a kind of internal logic. The tortilla has to be warm and pliable. The filling needs flavour identity. The salsa has to support that identity. Then freshness, crunch, fat and heat complete the bite.

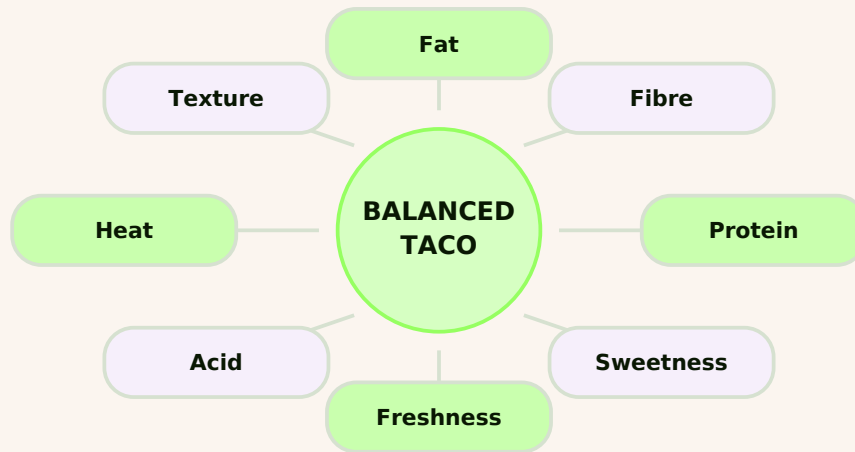
The Dito's Table approach is especially useful when cooking far away from Mexico, where not every chilli, herb or fresh Mexican ingredient is easy to source. Instead of copying one fixed recipe, build from principles.

Part	What it does	Examples	Question to ask
Proper tortilla	Carries flavour, warmth and aroma; gives structure.	Fresh corn tortilla, wheat tortilla for bigger/fried fish styles, tostada for crunch.	Does the tortilla help the taco or just hold it?
Filling identity	Gives the taco its main story.	Chicken tinga, ancho mushrooms, baja fish, tofu tinga, birria, lentil walnut picadillo.	Can I describe this filling in one clear phrase?
Salsa logic	Adds heat, acidity, smoke, creaminess or texture.	Salsa taquera, chipotle, habanero pineapple, avocado crema, salsa macha.	What is missing: lift, depth, fat, freshness, crunch?
Freshness	Prevents heaviness and gives colour.	Pico, onion-coriander, slaw, radish, lime, herbs, pickles.	Does the taco feel alive?
Texture	Turns a decent taco into a craving.	Crispy mushrooms, cabbage, batter, tostada, seeds, fried edges.	Is everything soft?

Taco Craft is also a discipline of restraint. A taco should not become a pile of every sauce in the fridge. Pick the direction, then support it.

## 2. The Flavour Matrix

This is the checklist that helps you build tacos that feel complete, especially when the filling is plant-forward or delicate.



Lever	Role in the taco	Best examples	Common mistake
Protein / foundation	Makes the taco feel like a meal, not just a snack.	Beans, tofu, seitan, mushrooms plus beans, fish, chicken, beef, lentils and walnuts.	Relying on vegetables alone, then wondering why the taco feels light.
Fibre	Adds body, satisfaction and structure.	Refried beans, cabbage slaw, pico, beetroot, sweet potato, roasted vegetables.	Forgetting that lean proteins like tofu or fish need support.
Good fat	Rounds chilli, carries aroma and creates indulgence.	Avocado crema, guacamole, cashew crema, tahini-chipotle, chipotle mayo, mole.	Only adding acid and heat, so the taco feels sharp.
Texture	Creates bite and prevents boredom.	Crispy mushrooms, fried fish, tostada, slaw, radish, salsa macha, charred edges.	Soft filling + soft beans + soft avocado + soft tortilla.
Heat	Gives Mexican identity and energy.	Chipotle, ancho, guajillo, habanero, salsa taquera, salsa macha.	Adding heat without fat, freshness or sweetness.
Acid	Lifts rich fillings and wakes up seafood.	Lime, pickled onions, salsa verde, pico, citrus slaw, vinegar in marinades.	Making delicate veggie tacos too sour.
Freshness	Adds colour, aroma and final contrast.	Onion-coriander, herbs, cucumber, radish, lettuce, pico de gallo.	Heavy filling with no bright finish.
Sweetness	Balances heat and smoke.	Pineapple, sweet potato, pumpkin, roasted peppers, mango salsa.	Letting chilli become punishing rather than exciting.

### Quick build formula

**1 foundation + 1 fibre layer + 1 creamy/fat element + 1 crunch + 1 heat source + 1 fresh note. Then taste and adjust.**

# 3. Proper Tortillas Are Not Optional

The tortilla is the first flavour and the final structure. If it fails, the taco fails.

In Dito's Table cooking, proper tortillas are a pillar, not a garnish. Fresh corn tortillas made from masa or masa harina bring aroma, softness and flexibility. They also change the emotional feel of the dish. A taco with a warm, fresh tortilla simply tastes more intentional.

The important distinction: ordinary cornmeal does not behave like nixtamalised masa. Nixtamalised corn becomes dough that can be pressed, cooked and folded without becoming brittle. That is why masa matters.

Use case	Best tortilla choice	Taco Craft note
Classic street-style taco	Small fresh corn tortilla	Ideal for tinga, pastor, barbacoa, mushrooms, beans, many vegan tacos.
Juicy or saucy filling	Warm corn tortilla, sometimes doubled	Double only when needed; do not hide a weak tortilla behind two dry ones.
Baja-style fried fish	Corn or wheat depending on texture preference	A slightly larger/softer tortilla can help with slaw, crema and crispy fish.
Tuna, ceviche, delicate seafood	Tostada or crisped tortilla	The crunch gives structure and prevents soft-on-soft.
Burrito-style or northern inspiration	Wheat tortilla	Useful for larger formats, but keep taco craft logic in the filling and sauces.

## Mini masa harina method

- Start with masa harina, warm water and a pinch of salt. Add water gradually because each brand hydrates differently.
- Knead until the dough feels like soft Play-Doh: moist, pliable and not sticky.
- Rest the masa for 20-30 minutes so hydration improves.
- Press between two pieces of plastic, then cook on a very hot comal or skillet.
- Flip, flip again, and look for the puff. The puff is not just theatre; it usually means hydration, heat and technique are working.

### Link to the Proper Tortillas guide

**Use this Taco Craft guide together with your Proper Tortillas PDF. Taco Craft tells readers what to build; Proper Tortillas teaches them how to make the vessel properly.**

## 4. Salsa Magic: Choose the Sauce by Function

A salsa is not decoration. It is a structural decision.

The easiest way to ruin a taco is to add the wrong sauce with confidence. The best sauce is not always the hottest one or the most complex one. It is the one that solves the taco's problem.

What the taco needs	Sauce direction	Works especially well with
Smoke and depth	Chipotle sauce, chipotle cashew crema, chipotle mayo	Chicken tinga, tofu tinga, beans, crispy mushrooms, vegan steak.
Freshness and lift	Pico de gallo, salsa verde, lime-heavy slaw	Fattier meats, birria, fried fish, barbacoa, richer fillings.
Creamy rounding	Avocado crema, cashew crema, tahini-chipotle	Ancho mushrooms, tofu, cauliflower, falafel, delicate fish.
Crunch and chilli oil drama	Salsa macha	Fish tacos, tofu tacos, beans and sweet potato, soft fillings.
Tropical heat	Habanero-pineapple, mango-jalapeno	Al pastor, baja fish, shrimp, jackfruit, mushroom pastor.
Low-acid support	Nutty crema, avocado sauce, mild green sauce	Plant-based tacos where you do not need to cut animal fat.

The Ancho Mushroom Taco is a perfect example: the ancho marinade already gives chilli depth, so a second red chilli salsa could compete. Avocado crema makes more sense because it rounds, softens and lets the mushroom stay in the spotlight.

### Link to Salsa Magic

**Use this guide as the taco construction manual, and the Salsa Magic guide as the flavour bomb library.**

# 5. The Taco Library: Think by Category

A taco menu becomes much easier when you group ideas by role, not only by protein.

Category	Taco Craft direction	Dito's Table examples
Plant-based	Bolder seasoning, more texture, deliberate fat and fibre.	Ancho mushrooms, tofu tinga, baja tofu, refried beans and sweet potato, vegan steak, crispy mushrooms.
Vegetarian	Cheese can add fat and comfort; keep freshness high.	Rajas con queso, roasted pepper and halloumi, mushroom and cheese, cheeseburger taco.
Pescatarian	Bright, fresh, often more acidic; avoid smothering delicate fish.	Baja fish, fish al pastor, tuna tostada, shrimp a la diablo, grilled sardines with salsa verde.
Meaty / flexitarian	Use richness with restraint; freshness matters more than extra sauces.	Chicken tinga, beef birria, beef barbacoa, lengua, pork al pastor.
Fusion	Respect taco architecture while borrowing ingredients.	Mexi-terranean falafel with avocado crema, lentil walnut picadillo, beetroot and walnut crema, seared tuna with olive-jalapeno salsa.

The point is not to make everything traditional or everything fusion. The point is to know when you are making a classic, when you are making an adaptation, and when you are using taco form as a canvas.

## 6. Plant-Forward Taco Blueprints

Plant-based tacos are not second-class tacos when they are built with proper flavour architecture.

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### Blueprint 1: Ancho Mushroom Taco

- Foundation: warm corn tortilla with a very thin layer of refried beans.
- Filling: oyster mushrooms marinated with ancho, cumin, oregano, onion, garlic and oil.
- Finish: pico de gallo for freshness and avocado crema for creamy rounding.
- Why it works: smoky-earthy mushrooms + bean support + fresh tomato-onion-lime + soft green fat.

### Blueprint 2: Refried Beans, Crispy Mushrooms and Chipotle Crema

- Foundation: refried beans for protein, fibre and glue.
- Texture: oyster mushrooms battered or dusted with cornflour and fried or air-fried.
- Sauce: chipotle cashew crema for smoke, fat and a little heat.
- Finish: lime and onion-coriander mix. Simple, but it has nutrition, richness, freshness and bite.

### Blueprint 3: Tofu Tacos That Actually Work

- Treat tofu as a flavour carrier, not as a miracle ingredient.
- Best directions: smoky tofu tinga, crispy baja tofu with nori/seaweed notes, or tofu al pastor only with stronger texture engineering.
- Key lesson: texture matters as much as marinade. Cornflour dusting, batter, panko, crisp edges and slaw can save tofu from being flat.
- Sauce logic: tofu usually needs creamy-spicy support: cashew crema, chipotle, mole, peanut or walnut sauce.

### Blueprint 4: Beans and Sweet Potato with Salsa Macha

- Foundation: refried beans.
- Sweetness: sweet potato, ideally browned or crisped.
- Heat and crunch: salsa macha.
- Fresh note: onion, coriander and lime. This is a very strong everyday taco because it is filling but still exciting.

# 7. Fish and Coastal Taco Craft

Fish tacos can be indulgent and fresh at the same time. They are one of the strongest routes into the Mexi-terranean idea.

Fish behaves differently from meat and vegetables. It is often more delicate, sometimes fattier, sometimes sweeter, and it usually benefits from brighter accompaniments. A good fish taco needs seasoning, acidity, creaminess, crunch, heat, herbs and the right tortilla or tostada structure.

Idea	Construction	Best sauce logic
Baja fish taco	Crispy fried fish + slaw + crema + lime + salsa.	Creamy plus bright. Add habanero or chipotle carefully.
Tuna tostada	Crisp tostada + chipotle mayo + marinated tuna + avocado + radish + onion-coriander.	Crunch first, then creamy-spicy and fresh.
Fish al pastor	Meaty fish in pastor-style marinade + slaw + grilled pineapple + avocado + habanero touch.	Tropical heat and fresh crunch.
Shrimp a la diablo	Spicy shrimp + warm tortilla + avocado or crema + herbs.	Bold heat, but with fat and freshness.
Grilled sardine or mackerel taco	Oily grilled fish + corn tortilla + salsa verde + herbs + radish.	Sharper salsa to cut rich fish.

## Fish taco rule

**Richer fish can take sharper salsas. Delicate fish needs lighter sauce. When in doubt, add crunch before adding more sauce.**

## 8. Chicken, Al Pastor and Birria: Comfort with Structure

Rich or saucy tacos need freshness and tortilla discipline.

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### **Chicken Tinga: the service-friendly taco**

- Identity: shredded chicken finished in tomato, onion and chipotle sauce.
- Taco build: about 60g chicken tinga, a touch of red salsa, avocado sauce for richness and onion-coriander-lettuce for freshness.
- Why it works: juicy shredded texture, smoky tomato depth, fast assembly and strong guest appeal.
- Taco Craft warning: do not bury it under too many condiments. Tinga already has sauce.

### **Al Pastor: sweet, spicy, sour, smoky, tropical**

- Classic identity: pork with chilli, achiote, vinegar, pineapple and caramelised edges.
- Best taco finish: grilled pineapple, onion-coriander, lime and either salsa verde or salsa taquera depending on fat and freshness needs.
- Plant-based winners: oyster mushrooms and jackfruit. Both can carry spice and offer texture.
- Fish version: meatier fish can work surprisingly well with pastor-style marinade.

### **Birria: the theatre taco**

- Identity: tender meat plus generous spiced broth/consomme.
- Build: dip one side of the tortilla in birria sauce, fry sauce-side down, add meat, onion-coriander and radish, fold and crisp.
- Why it works: crispy outside, juicy inside, broth on the side for dipping.
- Balance: radish, onion, coriander and lime are not optional decoration. They cut the richness.

## 9. The Mexi-terranean Twist

Mexi-terranean is not fusion for the sake of fusion. It is a way to make tacos more vibrant, nourishing and everyday-friendly.

The idea is Mexican flavour logic meeting Mediterranean instincts: chilli, lime, salsas and tortillas with legumes, herbs, nuts, seeds, fish, olive oil, tahini, seasonal vegetables and lighter proteins. The taco is the perfect vessel because it can hold both traditions without becoming too formal.

Mexi-terranean idea	How to build it as taco craft	Why it makes sense
Falafel with avocado crema	Crispy falafel + avocado crema + pickled onion + herbs + hot sauce.	Crunch, legumes, herbs and creamy green fat.
Lentil walnut picadillo	Lentils + walnuts + Mexican spices + pico + crema or avocado.	Protein, fibre, earthy depth and comfort.
Seared tuna with olive-jalapeno salsa	Tuna + olive/caper note + jalapeno + avocado + crisp tortilla or tostada.	Coastal, savoury, sharp and elegant.
Cauliflower with tahini-chipotle	Roasted cauliflower + tahini-chipotle sauce + herbs + salsa macha.	Nutty, smoky, creamy and vegetable-forward.
Refried chickpea taco	Chickpeas cooked like refried beans + smoky chilli + pico + avocado.	A Mediterranean legume wearing Mexican structure.
Beetroot and walnut taco	Roasted beetroot + walnut crema + pickles + herbs + chilli oil.	Earthy, sweet, colourful and Ukrainian-adjacent in spirit.

### Mexi-terranean rule

**Keep the taco architecture Mexican: tortilla, salsa logic, freshness, heat and balance. Then let Mediterranean ingredients bring nutrition, texture and a different kind of richness.**

# 10. 15 Taco Craft Blueprints

Use these as starting points for articles, home cooking, specials and Fiesta-style drops.

Taco	Base	Sauce	Freshness/texture
Ancho mushroom	Refried beans + ancho oyster mushrooms	Avocado crema	Pico de gallo, lime
Crispy mushroom	Beans + battered mushrooms	Chipotle cashew crema	Onion-coriander, cabbage
Tofu tinga	Crisped tofu + tinga sauce	Chipotle or cashew crema	Cabbage, fried onion, herbs
Baja tofu	Nori-wrapped battered tofu	Habanero or chipotle mayo	Slaw, lime, coriander
Beans and sweet potato	Refried beans + sweet potato	Salsa macha	Onion, coriander, lime
Vegan steak	Plant-based steak pieces	Chipotle crema or melty vegan cheese	Pico, lettuce, jalapeno
Chicken tinga	Shredded chicken tinga	Red salsa + avocado sauce	Onion-coriander-lettuce
Pork al pastor	Pastor-marinated pork	Salsa verde or taquera	Grilled pineapple, onion-coriander
Mushroom al pastor	Oyster mushrooms + pastor marinade	Salsa taquera	Pineapple, onion-coriander
Fish al pastor	Meaty fish + pastor marinade	Avocado crema + habanero touch	Slaw, pineapple, herbs
Baja fish	Crispy battered fish	Lime crema or chipotle mayo	Slaw, salsa, lime
Tuna tostada	Tostada + marinated tuna	Chipotle mayo	Avocado, radish, onion-coriander
Birria	Shredded beef + consomme	The cooking liquid	Radish, onion-coriander, lime
Falafel Mexi-terranean	Falafel + corn tortilla	Avocado crema	Pickled onion, herbs, hot sauce
Lentil walnut picadillo	Lentils + walnuts + spices	Avocado or tahini-chipotle	Pico, radish, coriander

# 11. Taco Troubleshooting

When a taco feels almost good, the fix is usually one lever away.

Problem	Likely cause	Taco Craft fix
Bland taco	Filling has no clear identity.	Choose a direction: tinga, pastor, ancho, baja, birria, picadillo. Season the filling before adding toppings.
Too soft	Soft filling + soft sauce + soft tortilla.	Add slaw, radish, tostada crunch, crispy edges, salsa macha or fried element.
Too sour	Acidic salsa on a lean filling.	Add fat: avocado crema, cashew crema, tahini-chipotle, guacamole or a milder sauce.
Too heavy	Rich filling with no lift.	Add lime, pickled onion, pico, radish, salsa verde or herbs.
Too hot	Chilli not balanced by fat, sweetness or starch.	Add crema, avocado, sweet potato, pineapple, beans or a milder fresh topping.
Dry tortilla	Overcooked, underhydrated or old tortilla.	Improve masa hydration, shorten cooking, use a warmer, reheat carefully.
Soggy taco	Sauce added too early or filling too wet.	Reduce filling, use a bean layer as barrier, serve immediately, or turn it into a tostada.
Confused flavour	Too many sauces fighting.	Remove one sauce. Decide the job: smoke, acid, cream, heat or crunch.

Most taco problems are not solved by adding more. They are solved by clarifying what is missing.

# 12. Taco Craft for Drops, Dinner and Content

A taco can become a recipe, an Instagram post, a Fiesta special or a future cookbook page.

This system is also useful for productising your content. A good taco drop should have a clear hook, a satisfying build, and a reason people can understand quickly.

Step	Decision	Example
1. Name the taco	Make the flavour identity obvious.	Ancho Mushroom Taco, Fish Al Pastor, Tofu Tinga, Mexi-terranean Falafel Taco.
2. State the promise	What will people feel in one bite?	Smoky, juicy, creamy, fresh and satisfying.
3. Build the matrix	Protein/foundation, fibre, fat, texture, heat, freshness.	Mushrooms + beans + avocado crema + pico + lime.
4. Decide the tortilla	Corn, wheat, double tortilla, tostada.	Fresh handmade corn tortilla for the ancho mushroom drop.
5. Choose one hero sauce	Avoid sauce confusion.	Avocado crema rather than another red chilli sauce.
6. Create the CTA	Invite people to cook it or try it.	Read the guide, then try the current taco drop at Fiesta in Tbilisi.

## A strong drop format

- Hook: This is not a veggie taco that apologises for being veggie.
- Build: handmade corn tortilla + refried bean base + ancho mushrooms + pico + avocado crema.
- System: flavour first, texture second, salsa with purpose, tortilla always respected.
- CTA: try it at Fiesta this week or read the full Taco Craft guide on Dito's Table.

# 13. Taco Craft Worksheet

Print this page or use it as a template before writing your next taco article.

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Question	Your notes
What is the taco idea in one sentence?	
What is the foundation/protein?	
Where does fibre/body come from?	
Where does fat/richness come from?	
Where does crunch or chewiness come from?	
What is the heat source?	
What is the acid/freshness source?	
Which tortilla format is best?	
Which sauce has the main job?	
What should be removed because it competes?	
What is the final CTA: cook it, read it, try it at Fiesta?	

# Further Reading on Dito's Table

Use these articles as the deeper recipe and technique library behind the Taco Craft system.

Article	URL
Plenty of Tacos: Veggie, Pescatarian & Meaty	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/plenty-of-tacos-veggie-fish-meat/">https://ditostable.com/food/plenty-of-tacos-veggie-fish-meat/</a>
Ancho Mushroom Tacos	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/ancho-mushroom-tacos/">https://ditostable.com/food/ancho-mushroom-tacos/</a>
Plant-Based Mexican Food That Eats Like a Night Out	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/plant-based-mexican-food-taco-casa/">https://ditostable.com/food/plant-based-mexican-food-taco-casa/</a>
How To Make Tortillas: Real Corn & Wheat Ones At Home	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/how-to-make-real-corn-wheat-tortillas-at-home/">https://ditostable.com/food/how-to-make-real-corn-wheat-tortillas-at-home/</a>
Mexican Hot Sauces & Salsas	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/mexican-hot-sauces-salsas-recipes/">https://ditostable.com/food/mexican-hot-sauces-salsas-recipes/</a>
Tofu Tacos: How to Cook Tofu the Mexican Way	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/tofu-tacos-cook-tofu-mexican/">https://ditostable.com/food/tofu-tacos-cook-tofu-mexican/</a>
Fish Tacos: Why They Work So Well in Mexican Food	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/fish-tacos-tuna-tostada/">https://ditostable.com/food/fish-tacos-tuna-tostada/</a>
Chicken Tinga Recipe, Tacos and Tips	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/chicken-tinga-recipe-tacos-tips/">https://ditostable.com/food/chicken-tinga-recipe-tacos-tips/</a>
Tacos Al Pastor: Classic, Vegan and Pescatarian Recipes	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/tacos/tacos-al-pastor-recipe-classic-vegan-fish/">https://ditostable.com/food/tacos/tacos-al-pastor-recipe-classic-vegan-fish/</a>
Birria Tacos Recipe	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/tacos/birria-tacos-recipe/">https://ditostable.com/food/tacos/birria-tacos-recipe/</a>
Refried Beans, Crispy Mushrooms & Chipotle Crema Vegan Taco	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/refried-beans-crispy-mushrooms-chipotle-cashew-crema-vegan-taco/">https://ditostable.com/food/refried-beans-crispy-mushrooms-chipotle-cashew-crema-vegan-taco/</a>
How to Make Tostadas from Leftover Tortillas	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/how-to-make-tostadas-from-leftover-tortillas/">https://ditostable.com/food/how-to-make-tostadas-from-leftover-tortillas/</a>
Mexi-terranean: Where Mexican Cuisine Meets Mediterranean	<a href="https://ditostable.com/food/mexi-terranean-mexican-cuisine-mediterranean/">https://ditostable.com/food/mexi-terranean-mexican-cuisine-mediterranean/</a>

## Final thought

The best tacos are not random. They are composed. They have a point of view. They respect the tortilla, use salsa with intelligence, and deliver contrast in every bite. That is Taco Craft.

Buen provecho - and see you at the taco table.