Main dishes / Mexico

Baja Fish Tacos

Beer-battered white fish fried to a shatteringly crisp golden shell, tucked in warm corn tortillas with shredded cabbage, crema, and a squirt of lime — the taco that put Ensenada on the map.

Time 40 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 5 parts White fish fillets (cod, halibut, or tilapia), skin off
- ☐ 2 parts All-purpose flour and cornstarch, equal parts combined
- ☐ 2 parts Mexican lager beer (Modelo Especial or Pacifico), cold
- ☐ 0.1 parts Cayenne pepper and garlic powder, equal parts
- ☐ 0.1 parts Fine salt
- ☐ 10 parts Neutral oil for deep-frying (vegetable or canola)
- ☐ 2 parts Corn tortillas (6-inch)
- ☐ 2 parts Shredded white cabbage, Mexican crema, lime wedges, and hot sauce

Let's make it.

01 Combine the flour-cornstarch blend, cayenne, garlic powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Pour in the cold beer all at once and stir with a fork just until combined — 8 to 10 strokes at most. The batter must be lumpy, not smooth. Lumps of unmixed flour are your friend: they create uneven pockets that fry into extra-crunchy patches. Do not over-mix. Keep the batter cold — set the bowl over ice if your kitchen is warm. Cold batter hits hot oil and creates maximum shatter.

02 Heat at least 5 cm of oil in a heavy pot or deep skillet to 180°C (350°F). Use a thermometer — temperature precision matters here. Cut the fish into 2 x 8 cm strips along the grain. Pat them bone-dry with paper towels, then season with salt. Working in batches of 3–4 strips (never crowd the pot), dip each strip into the batter, let the excess drip off for 3 seconds, then lower it into the oil away from you. Fry for 3–4 minutes, turning once, until the batter is a deep golden amber and the fish floats freely in the oil. Drain on a wire rack — not paper towels, which steam the crust soft.

03 Set a dry cast-iron skillet or comal over high heat. Toast each corn tortilla directly on the hot surface for 20–30 seconds per side until it puffs slightly, smells of toasted masa, and develops faint char spots. Stack and wrap in a clean cloth to keep warm and pliable — cold, stiff tortillas crack when folded around the fish.

04 Working quickly while the fish is still hot and crisp, lay two warmed tortillas slightly overlapping on a plate (Baja style uses two per taco for structural support). Add a strip of fried fish down the centre. Top with a loose mound of shredded cabbage, a generous drizzle of crema, a squeeze of lime, and a dash of hot sauce. Eat immediately — batter crust softens within 5 minutes of contact with moist toppings.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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