Main dishes / Mexico

Birria Tacos (Tacos de Birria)

Beef short ribs braised low and slow in a smoke-dark consommé of guajillo, ancho, and árbol chiles — the broth so richly gelatinous it fries to a lacquer when the tortilla hits the pan. Each taco is a double-dip affair: dunk the corn tortilla in the consommé, load it with shredded beef and Oaxacan cheese, then sear it until the outside blisters and the cheese melts into the meat.

Time 300 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Beef short ribs (bone-in)
- ☐ 8 parts Guajillo chiles, stemmed and seeded
- ☐ 4 parts Ancho chiles, stemmed and seeded
- ☐ 1 parts Árbol chiles, stemmed
- ☐ 15 parts Roma tomatoes, halved
- ☐ 10 parts White onion, quartered
- ☐ 3 parts Garlic cloves
- ☐ 0.5 parts Mexican cinnamon stick (canela)
- ☐ 0.5 parts Dried Mexican oregano
- ☐ 2 parts Fine sea salt

Let's make it.

01 Heat a dry comal or cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Press each chile flat against the surface for 10–15 seconds per side, until it softens and smells deeply fragrant — like raisins and leather — with the faintest wisp of smoke. Immediately transfer to a bowl and cover with boiling water. Weight them down with a plate and soak for 20 minutes until completely pliable.

02 On the same dry comal or skillet over high heat, place tomato halves cut-side down, onion quarters, and garlic cloves (unpeeled). Char until the tomatoes are blackened in spots and juices have caramelized, about 8 minutes. Turn everything once. The garlic skins will blister and the onion edges will go dark amber. Do not rush — this char is the flavor backbone of the consommé.

03 Drain the rehydrated chiles, reserving the soaking liquid. Peel the garlic. Combine chiles, charred aromatics, cinnamon, oregano, and salt in a blender. Add 1 cup of the reserved chile soaking liquid (taste it first — if it is bitter, use plain water instead). Blend on high for 90 seconds until completely smooth. The sauce should pour like heavy cream. Pass through a medium strainer, pressing the solids.

04 Season short ribs aggressively with salt. In a large Dutch oven or heavy pot, brown the ribs in batches over high heat — 4 minutes per side until deeply seared. Pour in the chile paste and enough water to just cover the meat (about 4–5 cups). Bring to a boil, then reduce to the lowest simmer. Partially cover and cook for 3.5–4 hours, until the meat falls from the bone with no resistance. Skim fat from the surface every 45 minutes — that skimmed fat is gold; reserve it for frying the tortillas.

05 Heat a comal or griddle over medium-high heat. Brush or spread the reserved skimmed chile fat over the surface. Dip a corn tortilla in the warm consommé for 3–4 seconds — it should emerge a deep brick red. Lay it on the comal. Pile one side with shredded birria meat and a fistful of quesillo (Oaxacan cheese). Fold the tortilla over and press gently. Cook for 90 seconds per side, until the outside crisps and the cheese has melted into the meat. Serve with a ramekin of hot consommé for dipping, diced white onion, and cilantro.

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