Main dishes / Mexico

Mexican Carnitas

Pork shoulder braised low and slow in lard with orange and bay until it surrenders completely, then crisped under the broiler into shatteringly caramelized shards — the essential Michoacán street taco filling.

Time 210 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1200 g Pork shoulder (bone-in preferred), cut into 8cm chunks
- ☐ 200 g Lard (or neutral oil as substitute)
- ☐ 2 g Oranges (juice and halved peels)
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves, unpeeled, smashed
- ☐ 3 g Bay leaves
- ☐ 3 g Dried Mexican oregano
- ☐ 3 g Ground cumin
- ☐ 15 g Coarse salt
- ☐ 60 ml Sweetened condensed milk (the Michoacán secret)

Let's make it.

01 Place the pork chunks in a wide, heavy Dutch oven or deep skillet. Add the lard, orange juice, orange peel halves (squeezed side down), smashed garlic, bay leaves, oregano, cumin, and salt. Add just enough cold water to barely cover the pork — about 500ml. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a steady simmer. Cook uncovered, maintaining a moderate simmer throughout. Do not cover — you want the liquid to evaporate. After 1 hour, add the condensed milk. Continue cooking for another 1.5–2 hours. As the water evaporates, the pork will transition from braising to frying in the rendered lard.

02 Once the liquid has evaporated and the pork is frying, begin turning the pieces every 2–3 minutes. The condensed milk will caramelize with the orange sugars, creating dark, lacquered spots. Break larger pieces apart with a spatula as you go. When the pork is a patchwork of deep golden and dark caramelized spots — or transfer to a foil-lined baking sheet and finish under the highest broiler for 5–7 minutes for extra shattering crispiness.

03 Taste the carnitas and adjust salt. Squeeze the remaining fresh orange juice over the hot meat — the acid will sizzle against the hot lard and brighten the flavor dramatically. Serve immediately on warm corn tortillas with diced white onion, fresh cilantro, salsa verde, and lime wedges. Carnitas are best within 30 minutes of cooking — the texture changes as they cool.

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