

2001 Tacos de Carnitas

Serves 12

This recipe from staff writer Tara Duggan was an across-the-board favorite of our tasters. This is perfect casual party fare; sure to please the Sunday sports crowd, or the kids coming home from college with a houseful of friends in tow. "This is one of the best recipes we've run in the 10 years I've worked here," said Food Editor Miriam Morgan. Duggan started working for The Chronicle in 1999 and writes the Working Cook column and is the author of "The Working Cook" (The San Francisco Chronicle Press).

- 4½ pounds pork butt**
- 6 cups water**
- 7 strips orange zest**
- 6 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1½ onions, diced**
- 1½ teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes**
- 1½ cinnamon sticks, preferably Mexican (see Note)**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 1½ teaspoons oregano leaves, crushed**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt + salt to taste**
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves**
- 24 small corn tortillas, warmed**
- Chopped cilantro**
- Finely chopped onion**
- Fresh salsa verde or hot sauce**

Trim any thick fat from the outside of the pork butt. Cut the meat into 1-inch cubes. Discard any cubes that are pure fat, but don't try to trim all of the fat out of the meat.

Put the pork in a large pot. Add the water, orange zest, garlic, onion, red pepper flakes, cinnamon, bay leaves, oregano, 1½ teaspoons salt and cloves. Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer. Skim off any scum that forms on the surface. Simmer for 1½ hours, until the pork is very soft, adding more water if necessary to keep the meat submerged. Season with salt.



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Bring to a gentle boil and cook until the water has evaporated about 30 minutes. Cook a little longer to fry the meat slightly. (Note: if you want extra-crispy carnitas, fry approximately 25 minutes.) Watch carefully to prevent burning.

Remove the bay leaves and cinnamon sticks. Put the meat in a fine strainer and push gently with a wooden spoon to remove any excess fat. Discard the fat.

Fold a few tablespoons of carnitas inside each tortilla and top each taco with cilantro, onion and salsa.

Note: Mexican cinnamon (canela) is found at Latin American markets.

Per serving: 390 calories, 37 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 14 g fat (4 g saturated), 114 mg cholesterol, 481 mg sodium, 5 g fiber.

