

Recipe by Julia Heffelfinger

Grilled Short Rib Tacos with Charred Salsa Roja

Serves 4

These juicy steak tacos deserve a place in your summer recipe rotation. In place of a thinner, leaner flank or skirt steak, I use thick, boneless beef short ribs. A cut from the chuck (or shoulder) of the animal, these ribs are beautifully marbled and have pockets of collagen that give them a rich, beefy flavor at a fraction of the price of a NY strip or ribeye. While short ribs are usually associated with braising, they get perfectly tender with bits of crispy rendered fat after a quick sear on a super-hot grill. I use a method here that calls for turning the meat every minute so it gradually builds up a deep brown crust as the side not on the grate cooks gently from the residual heat. Since the grill is already on, we also char some tomatoes and onions for an easy smoky salsa roja. This recipe yields 3 cups of salsa, so you'll have plenty leftover to spoon over the next day's breakfast tacos or to use in some saucy chilaquiles.

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Kosher salt and pepper

2 pounds boneless beef short ribs (about 1-inch thick), cut into 4-inch lengths (see Note)

Canola oil, for brushing

4 large plum tomatoes, halved (about 1½ pounds)

½ yellow onion, plus diced onion for garnish

4 whole jalapeños

2 canned chipotle chiles in adobo, plus 1 Tablespoon of sauce from the can, plus more as needed

¼ cup chopped cilantro, plus small sprigs for garnish

2 Tablespoons fresh lime juice (about 1 lime), plus more as needed

1 garlic clove, crushed and peeled

8 to 10 small warm flour or corn tortillas

Thinly sliced radishes, for garnish

Sour cream and lime wedges, for serving

1. In a small bowl, mix the granulated garlic with the cumin, 2 teaspoons of salt, and 1 teaspoon of pepper. Season the short ribs all over with the spice mix. Let sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes and up to 1 hour.
2. Preheat a grill to HIGH (500 to 600°F) and oil the grate. Grill the tomatoes and onion half, turning occasionally, until tender and charred, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool.
3. Place the short ribs and jalapeños on the grill. Cook (covered if using gas), flipping the ribs and jalapeños every minute, until the jalapeños are tender and nicely charred and the meat is well browned on all sides and registers about 125°F at its thickest part for medium rare, 6 to 8 minutes. (*Note: the ribs will be pale after the first flip but will continue to brown as they cook. This cut can overcook quickly, so start checking the temperature of smaller ribs after 6 minutes.*) Transfer the ribs and jalapeños to a plate and let rest for at least 5 minutes.

Recipe by Julia Heffelfinger

4. While the steaks are resting, transfer the charred tomatoes and onion to a food processor or blender with the canned chipotle chiles, adobo sauce, chopped cilantro, lime juice, garlic, 1 teaspoon of salt, and ½ teaspoon of pepper. Process until almost smooth. Adjust the seasoning to taste with more adobo sauce, lime juice, salt, and pepper. Scrape into a bowl; you should have about 3 cups of salsa.
5. Thinly slice the steak and transfer to a large platter. Slice the jalapeños in half lengthwise and arrange on the platter with the steak. Serve with warm tortillas, cilantro sprigs, sliced radishes, and diced onion for garnish. Pass the salsa, sour cream and lime wedges at the table. Enjoy!

NOTE If you are unable to find boneless short ribs, flank and skirt steak will also work for this recipe. Reduce the cooking time to 4 to 6 minutes since it is a leaner, thinner cut.

MAKE AHEAD The salsa can be made up to 2 days in advance and store in the refrigerator.