

Soft Tacos with Slow-Cooker Pork Carnitas

Serves 8 - 10

If you make nothing else in your slow cooker other than pork carnitas, its existence will be justified! The hands-off braising process transforms a difficult cut of meat into something highly desirable. The pork bathes in spices and flavorful juices for hours turning tough into fall-apart, fork-tender and tasty! This big batch of pork carnitas will form the basis of many delicious dishes; we started with soft tacos. We'll use the rest in burritos, enchiladas, posole, and maybe some BBQ sliders! It also freezes well for a speedy meal at some time in the future.

7 lb. boneless pork shoulder
1 tablespoon oregano, dried
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 tablespoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 medium, yellow onions, 1/4-inch dice
2 jalapeño peppers, diced finely
6 cloves garlic, crushed
2 oranges, juiced
1 lime, juiced
1 cup chicken stock

Soft Tacos with Pork Carnitas:

1 dozen soft flour tortillas
2 tablespoons cilantro, minced (optional for garnish)
1 small white onion, diced (optional for garnish)
Lime wedges for serving (optional for garnish)

Directions:

1. Trim excess fat from the pork shoulder, cut into large pieces and place in a slow cooker.
2. In a small bowl, mix the spices (oregano, cumin, chili powder, salt and pepper) together. Sprinkle over the pork pieces tossing to distribute.
3. Dice the onions and jalapeño peppers. Juice the oranges and lime. Add both to the pork. Stir and toss to distribute. Add one cup of chicken stock to the slow cooker.

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4. Cook on low for 8 hours, or on high for 4 hours.
5. With a slotted spoon, transfer the large pork pieces to a rimmed baking pan spreading in a single layer to cool slightly. Reserve the juices remaining in the slow cooker.
6. When cool enough to handle, shred the pork pieces with two forks.
7. Transfer the cooking juices to a large bowl. Allow to cool; skim excess fat from the top of the liquid. If desired, place the bowl in the refrigerator so that the fat congeals and becomes easier to remove.
8. Add the juices to the shredded pork – a great deal of the liquid will be absorbed by the pork, and with greatly increase the tastiness and moistness of the resulting carnitas. At this stage, if you plan to save some for later, freeze the pork and juice in usable portions.
9. For the portion of carnitas to be served immediately, accomplish a caramelization step in one of two ways: (1) In a large skillet, add a tablespoon of vegetable oil. Over medium-high heat, cover the bottom of the pan with shredded pork to a depth of 1/2-inch. Without disturbing, allow the pork to brown and the bottom to caramelize. Or, alternatively, (2) spread shredded pork on a rimmed baking sheet and place under a broiler and allow the tops to brown. Halfway through, stir gently and allow the top to brown once again. Serve the pork while warm from this caramelization step.
10. For soft tacos, add the caramelized pork to warmed flour tortillas. Add a generous sprinkling of diced white onions and minced cilantro, fold and enjoy!