Birria Tacos

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Spicy · Serves 4 (about 8–10 tacos)

Ken's note: TBD

A good weekend project. Once the beef is braised and shredded, the tacos come together quickly. The consommé is for dipping, cooking, and sipping.

Ingredients

- 6–8 dried guajillo chilies, stemmed and seeded
- 3 dried ancho chilies, stemmed and seeded
- 2–4 dried chiles de árbol, stemmed (use fewer for less heat)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 6 garlic cloves
- 2 tomatoes, or 1 cup canned tomatoes
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 inch cinnamon stick, or ¼ tsp ground
- 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 3 lb beef for braising (chuck plus a gelatinous cut such as short rib or shank)
- Salt and black pepper
- 1 Tbsp oil
- 3 cups beef broth, plus water as needed
- 2 bay leaves

For the tacos

- 8–10 corn tortillas
- 8 oz Oaxaca cheese, shredded (or mozzarella)
- Diced white onion, cilantro, and lime, for serving

Method

1. Toast the dried chilies in a dry skillet until fragrant, then cover with hot water and soak 15–20 minutes. Blend the drained chilies with the onion, garlic, tomatoes, cumin, oregano, cloves, cinnamon, vinegar, and a splash of the soaking liquid until very smooth.
2. Season the beef with salt and pepper and brown it in the oil in a heavy pot, in batches. Pour the chili purée over, add the broth and bay, and bring to a simmer. The liquid should nearly cover the meat; add water if needed. Cover and braise at 325°F (or at a low stovetop simmer) until the beef is very tender, about 3–3½ hours.
3. Let the beef rest in the pot 20–30 minutes, then lift it out and shred it. Strain the broth — that’s the consommé — and skim some of the fat; keep the fat for the plancha. Taste the consommé and salt at the end. Moisten the shredded beef with a little consommé.
4. Dip each tortilla in the consommé (or brush with the reserved fat), lay it on a hot plancha or skillet, add cheese and beef, and fold. Cook until the tortilla is crisp and the cheese has melted. Serve with consommé for dipping, and onion, cilantro, and lime.