

Carnitas (Mexican Slow Cooker Pulled Pork)

Recipe **VIDEO** above. **Spiciness:** Not at all. Scale recipe using Servings slider.

These carnitas capture that elusive combination of flavourful, juicy AND crispiness. Pan frying to get the golden bits is not optional! Broiling/grilling will not produce the same results. Stuff them in tacos for an authentic Carnitas Tacos experience, see notes for other uses! FAQ below recipe.



4.96 from 823 votes

Prep Time

15 mins

Cook Time

6 hrs

Total Time

6 hrs 15 mins

Course: Slow cooking Cuisine: Mexican Keyword: Carnitas, Pork Carnitas recipe
Servings: 10 - 12 Calories: 578cal Author: Nagi | RecipeTin Eats

Ingredients

- 2 kg / 4 lb pork shoulder (pork butt) , skinless, boneless (5lb/2.5kg bone in) (Note 1)
- 2 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 onion , chopped
- 1 jalapeno , deseeded, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 cup juice from orange (2 oranges)

Rub

- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tbsp olive oil

Instructions

1. Rinse and dry the pork shoulder, rub all over with salt and pepper.
2. Combine the Rub ingredients then rub all over the pork.
3. Place the pork in a slow cooker (fat cap up), top with the onion, jalapeño, minced garlic (don't worry about spreading it) and squeeze over the juice of the oranges.

4. Slow Cook on low for 10 hours or on high for 7 hours. (Note 2 for other cook methods)
5. Pork should be tender enough to shred. Remove from slow cooker and let cool slightly. Then shred using two forks.
6. Optional: Skim off the fat from the juices remaining in the slow cooker and discard.
7. If you have a lot more than 2 cups of juice, then reduce it down to about 2 cups. The liquid will be salty, it is the seasoning for the pork. Set liquid aside - don't bother straining onion etc, it's super soft.

To Crisp:

1. Heat 1 tbsp of oil in a large non stick pan or well seasoned skillet over high heat. Spread pork in the pan, drizzle over some juices. Wait until the juices evaporate and the bottom side is golden brown and crusty. Turn and just briefly sear the other side - you don't want to make it brown all over because then it's too crispy, need tender juicy bits.
2. Remove pork from skillet. Repeat in batches (takes me 4 batches) - don't crowd the pan.
3. Just before serving, drizzle over more juices and serve hot, stuffed in tacos (see notes for sides, other serving suggestion and storage/make ahead).

Notes

1. **The Pork:** Use pork with the skin removed but leaving some of the fat cap on. The fat adds juiciness to the carnitas - and excess fat can be skimmed off later.

Different sizes: Recipe fine as is for 1.7 - 2.5kg / 3.5 - 5 lb pork. If larger / smaller, scale recipe using recipe scaler (hover/click on servings and slide) and the other ingredients will change. These are boneless pork weights (add 0.5kg/1lb for bone):

1 - 1.5 kg / 2 - 3 lb: 8 hours on low. 1.5 - 3 kg / 3 - 6 lb: Cook time per recipe. 3 - 4 kg / 6 - 8 lb: Use large oval slow cooker, 12 hours on low.

2. Other cooking methods:

Electric pressure cooker or Instant Pot: 1 h 30 minutes on high. Let pressure release naturally. Proceed with Step 5 of recipe.

Stove pressure cooker: use a rack or balls of scrunched up foil to elevate it from the base OR add 3/4 cup of water. Cook 1 h 30 minutes. Proceed with Step 5 of recipe.

Oven: Follow recipe but put pork in roasting pan. Add 2 cups water around pork. Cover tightly with foil, roast in 325F/160C oven for 2 hours, then roast for a further 1 to 1.5 hours uncovered. Add more water if the liquid dries out too much. You should end up with 1 1/2 to 2 cups of liquid when it finishes cooking, and you can skip the pan frying step because you will get a nice brown crust on your pork. Shred pork then drizzled with juices.

3. **Taco Fixings:** Diced avocado or make a real proper Guacamole, Pico de Gallo or Restaurant Style Salsa or even just sliced tomato, grated cheese, sour cream. Sliced lettuce or pickled cabbage / red onions would also be great, but unlike other tacos, you don't need it for the

texture because the carnitas have the crispy bits! Also see this Carnitas Tacos dinner spread.

4. Other Ways to use Carnitas: Burritos (switch for the beef), Quesadillas (baked version here), Enchiladas, Sliders, with Mexican Red Rice, in Taco Soup or Enchilada Soup.

5. Storing / Make Ahead: Crispiness is retained very well, main thing is loss of moisture as meat cools (happens with all meat, shredded meat cools faster).

a) Best way to store: Shred pork but don't pan fry. Keep pork and juice separate, refrigerate up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months (for freezer, I put pork in containers/ bags and put juice in ziplock bags in the same container).

Gently reheat juice to make it pourable (congeals when cold). Pan fry per recipe, drizzling with juice.

b) Storing leftovers after pan frying: Keeps extremely well, but tends to lose juiciness when it cools down. Just drizzle with juice, cover with cling wrap and reheat - the crispy bits hold up very well. It's not quite as crispy as when cooked fresh, but still seriously tasty.

c) Brown pork a few hours ahead / keep warm: Works extremely well. Brown pork per recipe, then transfer to slow cooker on warm setting or food warmer and drizzle generously with juices to keep it moist. Cover loosely. As long as the pork is warm when served, it's really juicy. The crispiness holds up extremely well.

6. Source: This is a recipe I've been making for over a decade now, with minor tweaks over time so I can't remember the exact source. I want to say Rick Bayless but I can't find the recipe, however, I did find this one from Food Network which is very similar. However, I'm not sure when it was published.

7. Nutrition per serving, pork only, assuming 12 servings. Calories is higher than it actually is because it does not take into account discarded fat.

Nutrition

Serving: 205g | Calories: 578cal | Carbohydrates: 1.7g | Protein: 45g | Fat: 42g | Saturated Fat: 15g | Polyunsaturated Fat: 4.1g | Monounsaturated Fat: 19g | Cholesterol: 173mg | Sodium: 616mg | Potassium: 664mg | Sugar: 0.5g | Vitamin A: 40IU | Vitamin C: 4.3mg | Calcium: 60mg | Iron: 2.9mg