

Seasonal Eating
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Transform Leftover Barbecue
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I think of March as a transitional month. The cold, winter air gives way to the fresh, lighter, warmer air of spring. Foods can transform as well. This week I had some hearty pulled pork barbecue sandwiches and had some of the meat left over. So I transformed it with some vegetables into great pulled pork tacos.

My Dad has done a lot of experimenting with making pulled pork barbecue over the last few years. I must say, for a northerner raised in Michigan where in his family barbecues were ground beef with tomato sauce, he makes a great traditional southern, smoky pulled pork. His process is an all-day adventure involving pork shoulders, rubs, a smoker, a briny cooking liquid, the oven, scratch made barbecue sauce and finally pulling and packing. He does several shoulders at a time and then freezes the meat to be enjoyed over the next few months. There is definitely an art to making good barbecue. While I used his pork for my tacos, any leftover (or not left over) pulled pork barbecue will work.



To transform into tacos, the pork is mixed with a spicy can of tomatoes with chilies and topped with Monterey Jack cheese, sour cream and a fresh pico de gallo to lighten things up. Pico de Gallo is basically a fresh salsa made with a mixture of tomatoes, onions and peppers seasoned with cilantro, salt and lime juice. Traditionally made with Roma tomatoes, try using cherry or grape tomatoes for a better flavor when the Romas are not in their peak season in the summer. Because I used the tomatoes with chilies in the meat, I did not add any jalapeno to my pico de gallo as I normally would. I did season it with onion powder, garlic powder, ground cumin, salt and pepper and added chopped cilantro and some lime juice for a bright, acidic contrast to the meat – yum! This is the same concept as adding slaw to a pulled pork sandwich to balance the rich meat.

I usually fry corn tortillas in just a coating of vegetable oil in a skillet for a minute or so on each side to make soft tacos but you could use the crispy taco shells and heat in the oven for a few minutes or you can use flour tortillas heated in the microwave, if your family prefers these.

Not only are these tacos delicious, smoky and fresh and creamy, but they are beautiful on the plate. The next time you have some barbecue in the fridge, celebrate Taco Tuesday.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Pulled Pork Barbecue Tacos

- 10 ounces cherry tomatoes, quartered
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ½ bunch fresh cilantro, chopped plus some sprigs for garnishing
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt or more to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 pound pulled pork meat
- 1 (10 oz.) can diced tomatoes with green chilies, drained well
- 8 corn tortillas, lightly fried to soften (or crispy taco shells)
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1 cup sour cream

For pico de gallo: Stir together the tomatoes, onion, cilantro, onion powder, garlic powder, cumin, salt, pepper and lime juice, taste and adjust seasonings as desired. Let stand up to 2 hours or refrigerate until ready to use. Combine pork and canned tomatoes with chilies and heat on the stovetop or in the microwave until hot, draining off any excess liquid. Spoon some of the meat mixture down the center of each tortilla or shell. Top with 2 tablespoons of cheese and sour cream. Using a slotted spoon, top with pico de gallo and a sprig of cilantro. Serve immediately.