



Smoky Black Bean Tacos with Strawberry Salsa

Serves 4

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

I know this recipe looks a bit longer than my usual ones. The TLDR: You season and warm some black beans, crush up some strawberries with lime juice and a few typical salsa fresca ingredients, and then make some tacos. The garnishes here are what I suggest but feel free to swap, add, or subtract.

If you're good at multitasking and fast with a knife, these will come together in about a half hour. If slow and steady is more your pace, it will take up to 45 minutes.

For the beans

4 scallions (green onions)
3 cloves garlic
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon cumin seeds or ground cumin
½ teaspoon dried oregano
Two 15-ounce cans black beans with their liquid
Salt, optional

For the strawberry salsa

1 cup strawberries
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
Pinch of salt
Pinch of sugar
1 scallion (green onion)
1 small jalapeño
¼ cup loosely packed cilantro leaves

For serving

5 to 8 radishes
1 lime
Cilantro sprigs
12 corn tortillas (about 6 inches each)
Crumbled cotija cheese (optional)

Prep and cook the beans

Trim off the root ends of the scallions and remove any papery outer layer. Thinly slice the scallions.

Peel the garlic cloves and thinly slice.

In a deep skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the scallions and garlic and cook, stirring, until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. (Resist the urge to season them with salt. If your canned beans are salted, it might make everything too salty.)

Add the smoked paprika, garlic powder, cumin seeds and dried oregano and toast for about 15 seconds. Stir in the beans with their liquid. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat back to medium.

Simmer the beans for 5 minutes, then use a spoon to mash some of the beans to help thicken the liquid. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally to make sure nothing is sticking to the bottom of the pan, until the beans are suspended in a fairly thick liquid, about 5 minutes longer.

Turn off the heat but leave the beans on the burner to keep warm. Taste the beans, and add more salt if desired.

Make the strawberry salsa

As the beans cook, you can start getting the salsa together.

Remove the green tops from the strawberries and drop them into a bowl. Use your hands or a potato masher to crush up the strawberries to a pulp. Stir in the lime juice along with a pinch of salt and a pinch of sugar.

Remove the roots from the scallion and thinly slice.

Finely chop the jalapeño, leaving in some or all of the seeds if you want some heat. (I think it tastes best with the seeds.)

Finely chop the cilantro.

Stir the scallion, jalapeño, and cilantro into the strawberries, then taste. Balance the flavors to your liking with more salt or sugar, if you like.

If you have the time, let the salsa hang out so the flavor meld for 5 to 10 minutes.

Prep the garnishes, warm the tortillas, and serve

Thinly slice the radishes and arrange them on a plate.

Cut the lime into wedges and arrange alongside.

Arrange the cilantro sprigs on the plate as well.

On the stovetop directly over a flame, or in a dry medium frying pan over medium heat, warm the tortillas, turning once, until just pliable and warmed through, about 30 seconds per side.

(To make this go faster, I like to use multiple burners at a time to warm the tortillas.)

Wrap the tortillas in a clean towel to keep them warm.

To serve, set out the warm beans, the salsa, and tortillas with the garnishes and crumbled cotija cheese and invite everyone to make their own tacos.

The short version

- Thinly slice the scallion and garlic. Heat the olive oil and cook the scallion and garlic until soft and then toast the spices. Add the beans with their liquid, cook for 5 minutes, then smash up some of the beans to thicken the liquid and cook until it looks like a good taco filling.
- While the beans cook, trim and smash the strawberries. Add the lime juice and a pinch of salt and sugar. Slice the scallion and finely chop the jalapeño and cilantro. Add them to the strawberries. Season with more salt and sugar if you like.
- Make a garnish plate with sliced radishes, cilantro springs and lime wedges. Warm the tortillas. Serve the beans, salsa, and tortillas with the garnishes and some crumbled cotija cheese.

Fun for kids

- Measure out the spices.
- Trim and smash the strawberries!
- Arrange the prepared garnishes on a plate.
- Toast the tortillas (with adult assistance).

Swaps

- Instead of black beans, use pinto beans.
- Instead of scallions, use ½ small white onion.
- Instead of making strawberry salsa, make (or buy) a mango salsa. (I wrote a recipe for one here.)
- Instead of jalapeño, use serrano chile for more heat. Or if you don't have fresh chiles on hand but want some heat, add a pinch crushed red pepper.
- If you don't like cilantro, leave it out.
- Instead of radishes, use raw shredded cabbage or coleslaw mix.
- Instead of cotija cheese, try queso fresco or feta.
- Instead of corn tortillas, use any kind of tortilla you like!

Bonus points

- If you enjoy cooking your own beans, please do! Save about 1 cup of the cooking liquid to add with the beans.
- If you have the green tops from your radishes, wash, chop, and add them with the black beans.
- Add a little diced avocado, to the garnish plate if you like.
- Susan Spungen told me it was worth making my own tortillas, so I did and I agree! I used Bob's Red Mill Masa Harina to make it easy. I now have my eye on the masa harina from Masienda. Have you tried?