

Po' Boy Shrimp Tacos – Comfort du Jour

This is what happened in my kitchen when I decided to twist together Mardi Gras and Taco Tuesday.

The New Orleans flavors are purposely prominent here—savory dry spices in my [handmade corn tortillas](#), spicy Cajun seasoning in the shrimp breading, and a bold and zesty remoulade on top. No cheese or salsa; rather, you'll find po' boy toppings, including thinly shredded lettuce, tomato and pickles. But also some thinly sliced jalapeno, which didn't bother my taco-loving husband one bit.

The shrimp or fish on a true po' boy would be deep fried in a cornmeal crust, so I went along with tradition on that, but you could easily skip the breading and season the shrimp straight in the Cajun spices before a quick sauté, same as I do for my go-to [Cajun shrimp & garlicky cheese grits](#).

INGREDIENTS

6 corn tortillas* (see notes)
1/2 lb. Gulf shrimp*, peeled and deveined
2 tsp. spicy Cajun or Creole seasoning* (use directly if sautéing, or mix with breading below)
Canola or peanut oil for frying (amount depends on whether you use breading)

BREADING (OPTIONAL)

1/2 cup all-purpose flour, divided
1/2 cup cultured buttermilk
1/4 cup fine or medium cornmeal

TOPPINGS

About 1/2 cup finely shredded lettuce (I used romaine)
1/2 cup chopped fresh tomato
A few thin slices fresh jalapeno (optional)
5 or 6 slices chopped sweet and spicy pickles (we love "Wickles" brand)

REMOULADE

4 Tbsp. mayonnaise
1 Tbsp. Frank's RedHot Sauce (original variety)
1 Tbsp. minced fresh garlic
2 Tbsp. finely minced red onion
1/4 tsp. paprika (sweet or smoked)
1 Tbsp. sour cream
Salt and pepper

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*INGREDIENT NOTES

You could certainly use store-bought corn tortillas for your po' boy tacos, and perhaps give them a quick flip through a dry cast-iron skillet to warm and slightly char them just before serving. We love handmade corn tortillas, and I added about 1/2 teaspoon each of smoked paprika and onion powder to my masa dough, to lend a little more flair. See my previous post on [handmade corn tortillas](#) for more detail about the technique.

I used large shrimp, 16 to 20 count per pound, but I cut them in half for easier divvying among our tacos. My recommendation for Gulf coast shrimp is not merely for authenticity (it is, after all, intended to be a tribute to New Orleans), but also for the integrity of the product. Seafood from other countries, especially the stuff that comes out of Southeast Asia, is prone to problems ranging from over-fishing and contamination to heinous human rights violations.

To clarify, Cajun and Creole seasonings are not the same, but both are prominent in Louisiana cooking, and I believe they are interchangeable in this recipe, mostly based on your tolerance for heat. Cajun cuisine leans more toward spicy pepper heat and Creole is more about the dried herbs. I used a chile and garlic Cajun powdered seasoning, added to the cornmeal breading. If you skip the breading, simply toss the shrimp directly in the seasoning before sautéing—and don't skimp.

INSTRUCTIONS

Make the remoulade ahead, so the flavors have time to meld in the fridge. Stir together all ingredients and adjust heat, salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate until serving time.

For a sautéed version, pat the shrimp dry on paper towels. Spritz them with spray oil and then toss in the Cajun seasoning until well coated. Heat a small amount of oil in a skillet and saute, turning once, until shrimp are no longer pink. Total cooking time should be two to four minutes, depending on the size of the shrimp.

For fried shrimp, heat canola or peanut oil over medium heat in a cast iron skillet, about 1/2" deep. Pat the shrimp dry on paper towels. Set up a breading station, with half the flour in one dish, buttermilk in the second, and remaining flour mixed with cornmeal, Cajun seasoning and cayenne (if using) in a third.

When the oil is ready (toss a bread cube in to see if it bubbles immediately), toss the shrimp lightly in the plain flour, then dip into the buttermilk and finally the cornmeal mixture. Add the shrimp pieces to the skillet one at a time, keeping room between them. Turn the shrimp pieces when they are golden on the bottom, and salt immediately upon transfer to a paper towel-lined plate. If you need to add oil, do it between batches and allow time for it to return to proper temperature.

Assemble the po' boy tacos, beginning with shredded lettuce, tomato and jalapeno (if using). Divide the shrimp among the tacos, dress with remoulade and garnish with chopped spicy pickles.