



Spicy BBQ Pork Taco at Agave Grill in Hartford, CT

Visit some of these taco spots on Cooking Channel's *Taco Trip*, hosted by Aarón Sánchez, 8 p.m. Sunday, April 27.

50



STATES fifty TACOS

During our search for America's tastiest tacos, we discovered that chefs will stuff anything into a tortilla: mac and cheese, hearts of palm, octopus. Our taco team tried hundreds of them to come up with this list of the best taco in every state (and D.C., too!). Wherever you are, these picks are worth the trip.





ALABAMA
Grilled Catfish Taco
Kowaliga Restaurant,
Alexander City

This classic Southern taco is the best reason to visit Kowaliga. Another: Hank Williams penned “Kaw-Liga” about a wooden Indian that once held court here. \$5; 295 Kowaliga Marina Rd.; kowaligarestaurant.com



ALASKA
Copper River Salmon Taco
Baja Taco, Cordova

The salmon here is as fresh as you can get—it’s caught nearby and served on a tortilla smothered with salsa, chipotle mayo and shredded cabbage. \$5.25; 1 Harbor Loop Rd.; bajatacoak.com



ARIZONA
Carne Asada Taco
El Güero Canelo, Tucson

Hot dogs are the specialty of the house here, but the carne asada tacos are the reason lunch lines wrap around the restaurant. You get to top them yourself with veggies, avocado crema and three kinds of salsa. \$2; multiple locations; elgueroanelo.com



ARKANSAS
Chorizo Taco
Local Lime, Little Rock

These little winners are proof that a tiny taco can be big on flavor. They’re packed with a mix of chorizo, caramelized pineapple and jack cheese—and each one is gone in two bites. \$10.50 for three; 17815 Chenal Pkwy.; localimetaco.com



CALIFORNIA
Short Rib Taco
Kogi BBQ, Los Angeles

Mention “Korean tacos” in Los Angeles and locals will lead you here: Chef Roy Choi’s caramelized short rib taco topped with chili-soy slaw started a citywide Korean taco trend in 2008. \$2.29; multiple locations; kogibbq.com



COLORADO
Pork Belly Taco
Pinche Tacos, Denver

Visitors drive from several towns away to dig into this pork belly taco: a thick slice braised in orange juice and vinegar, served with candied garlic and a side of dipping jus. \$3.50; two locations; tacostequilawhiskey.com



CONNECTICUT
Spicy BBQ Pork Taco
Agave Grill, Hartford

You can order these blue corn tortillas with all sorts of fillings, but barbecue pork is the most loved. Fans say the tacos are as close to Mexican street food as you can find in Connecticut. \$11 for two; 100 Allyn St.; agavect.com



DELAWARE
Tacos de Pescado
El Dorado Restaurant,
Rehoboth Beach

Mahi mahi is called dorado in Spanish, and that’s the filling of the most popular taco here: The fish is beer-battered and topped with a mayo sauce and cabbage. \$3.75; 18766 John J. Williams Hwy.; eldoradorehoboth.com



FLORIDA
Fried Chicken Taco
Huahua’s Taqueria,
Miami Beach

Even past midnight, crowds form at this hot spot for the fried chicken taco with jalapeño cornbread croutons. \$3.99; 1211 Lincoln Rd.; huahuastaco.com



GEORGIA
Mac Daddy Taco
Bad Dog Taqueria, Atlanta

Get here early! Chefs make only about 75 of these off-the-menu tacos daily. They’re strange but great: tomato-corn tortillas stuffed with four-cheese pasta. \$9; 1579 N. Decatur Rd.; baddogtaco.com



HAWAII
Spicy Ahi Tempura Shrimp Taco
Surf N Turf Tacos, Honolulu

You wouldn’t think to put sushi fillings inside a taco, but it’s a smart move: Tempura shrimp and spicy tuna are even better topped with pico de gallo in a corn shell. \$5; two locations; surfnturftacos.com



IDAHO
Corned Beef Taco
Crooked Fence Barrelhouse,
Garden City

This unusual taco is a hit with Idaho’s Irish population. Chefs serve traditional corned beef in a not-so-traditional way: beer-braised, on a corn tortilla. \$9 for two; 5181 Glenwood St.; cfbarrelhouse.com



ILLINOIS
Birria
Birrieria Zaragoza, Chicago

The menu proves just how much regulars love birria, slow-roasted, mole-marinated goat: It’s one of the few things sold here. Place an order and you’ll get a side of tortillas to build your own tacos. \$10.50; 4852 S. Pulaski Rd.; 773-523-3700



INDIANA
Skirt Steak Taco
La Chinita Poblana,
Indianapolis

All of the dishes at this fusion taqueria are Asian-inspired, and this one is the tastiest: curry-and-citrus skirt steak topped with avocado crema and fresh herbs. \$3; 927 E. Westfield Blvd.; lachinitapoblana.com

MAIN PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER TESTANI; FOOD STYLING: PAIGE HICKS; AL: RUSSELL LANDS; AK: ANDRA DOLL; AZ: BRINK MEDIA; AR: ARSHIA KAHN; CA: ERIC SHIN.

HI: DUSTIN HARA; IL: NAOMI EZQUIVEL; IN: AMY DRENTLAW-ROSE.



IOWA

Original Flour Taco
Tasty Tacos, Statewide

The Tasty Tacos chain has been around for 53 years, and this deep-fried beef taco—created by the owner's grandmother—has been a Hawkeye State favorite for decades. \$2.95; tastytacos.com



KANSAS

Buena Terra Taco
Taco Republic, Kansas City

You won't have trouble finding Taco Republic—it's in a former gas station. The popular veggie taco is an Argentinian specialty: fried hearts of palm with a mayo-ketchup sauce and avocado. \$2.95; 500 County Line Rd.; eatacorepublic.com



KENTUCKY

Soft Shell Crab Taco
Holy Molé taco truck, Louisville

These aren't your everyday seafood tacos: Fried soft shell crab and kimchi are served in two steamed corn tortillas and drizzled with chipotle mayo. \$5; Twitter for location: @HolyMoleTruck



LOUISIANA

Bánh Mì Taco
Pho Bistreaux, New Orleans

This NOLA restaurant is known for its quirky multi-culti mash-ups. The banh mi taco has all the fixings of a Vietnamese sandwich, but in a lighter (equally tasty) package. \$5.50 for two; 1200 S. Carrollton Ave.; phobistreaux.biz



NEBRASKA

Al Pastor Taco
La Choza Restaurant, Omaha

Many traditional pork tacos are topped with pineapple, but the fruit gets extra play at this Salvadoran joint: The pork is marinated in pineapple pieces, then put on the rotisserie to caramelize the juices. \$1.75; 5133 S. 25th St.; 402-733-9554



NEVADA

Silencio Taco
China Poblano, Las Vegas

Renowned Spanish chef José Andrés has created an unusual, irresistible combo: lychee and duck tongue in a corn tortilla. \$5.50; *The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas*; 3708 S. Las Vegas Blvd.; cosmopolitanlasvegas.com



NEW HAMPSHIRE

Taco de Carne Asada
Mixteca Taqueria y Cantina, Durham

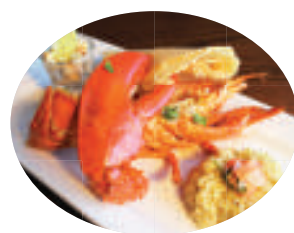
This garlic-and-chili-marinated tri-tip taco gets an extra-special topping: wild mushrooms foraged from the woods nearby. \$9 for three; 10 Jenkins Ct.; mixtecataqueria.com



NEW JERSEY

Barbacoa de Costilla Taco
The Taco Truck, multiple locations

This taco quickly went from a special to a menu staple: Locals love the extra-tender short rib braised in a garlic-chile sauce and served in two corn tortillas. \$5 for two; thetacotruck.com



MAINE

Puerto Nuevo Langosta Taco
Zapoteca Restaurante y Tequileria, Portland

Lobster gets extra-special treatment here: It's steamed in beer, sautéed in duck fat and served in its shell next to corn tortillas. \$12; 505 Fore St.; zapotecarestaurant.com



MARYLAND

Tilapia Taco
Tortilleria Sinaloa, Baltimore

This spot is known for its homemade tortillas—the staff cranks out thousands daily. Regulars love them even more when they're stuffed with Old Bay-seasoned tilapia. \$5; 1716 Eastern Ave.; tortilleria-sinaloa.com



MASSACHUSETTS

Short Rib Ropa Vieja "Double Stack" Taco
The Painted Burro, Somerville

You don't have to pick a side in the hard-versus-soft tortilla debate: This short rib taco, stuffed with three cheeses and roasted poblano, has both. \$8; 219 Elm St.; thepaintedburro.com



MICHIGAN

Pollo Rostizado Taco
Dos Hermanos Market, Ypsilanti

The rotisserie chicken taco is a perennial bestseller at this authentic Mexican market, but you'll need to plan your visit: It's available only on weekends. \$1.60; 412 W. Michigan Ave.; 734-487-8839



MINNESOTA

Squash and Shiitake Mushroom Taco
World Street Kitchen, Minneapolis

Even meat lovers have ordered seconds of this hearty veggie taco with pepita salsa. It's the brainchild of a former Iron Chef contestant. \$6 for two; 2743 Lyndale Ave. S.; eatwsk.com



MISSISSIPPI

Carne El Cerdo Taco
Babalú Tacos & Tapas, Jackson

Locals named the menu here "Most Innovative" in the weekly paper. A case in point: this pork belly taco with citrus-chipotle barbecue sauce and peanut slaw. \$8.50 for three; 622 Duling Ave.; babalums.com



MISSOURI

Tacos de Ostiones
Port Fonda, Kansas City

When chef Patrick Ryan tried to get rid of his oyster tempura taco with jalapeño crema, regulars petitioned for its return. But you can only get it from March to September. \$7 for two; 4141 Pennsylvania Ave.; portfondakc.com



MONTANA

Elk Chorizo Taco
Pescado Blanco, Whitefish

Chefs here call their food "Mountain Mexican," and this taco is a good example: crema-drizzled elk chorizo with arugula, mushrooms and caramelized onions. \$12.50 for two; 235 First St.; pescadoblanco.com

NEW MEXICO

Navajo Taco
Earl's Family Restaurant, Gallup

Navajo fry bread is a statewide favorite, and it tastes even better in taco form. Here, the puffed disks are piled with classic toppings: ground beef, beans and cheese. \$13; 1400 E. Historic Hwy. 66; 505-863-4201



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NEW YORK
Al Pastor Taco

Tacos El Bronco, Brooklyn

Brooklyn's Sunset Park is full of great Mexican food, but locals gravitate here for flawless pork tacos served with roasted onion bulbs. The recipe comes from the owner's brother in Mexico. \$1.50; 4324 4th Ave.; tacoselbronco.com



NORTH CAROLINA
Pato Carnitas Taco

Cantina 1511, Charlotte

A three-step process makes the duck filling in this taco super tender: The meat is cured, slow-cooked and then lightly grilled. It's drizzled with a tangy avocado-tomatillo sauce. \$4.25; two locations; cantina15eleven.com



NORTH DAKOTA
Panko Walleye Tacos

Mezzaluna, Fargo

Fans of this fish taco know it's what's on top that counts: a deliciously sweet-and-spicy chili aioli. The fresh flour tortillas, made by hand at a nearby market, are a bonus. \$10 for two; 309 Roberts St.; dinemezzaluna.com



OHIO

Turducken Taco

The Coop food truck, Columbus

This sounds like a Turkey Day special, but lucky for us, the taco—turkey, duck and chicken meat stewed in a guajillo sauce and served with pickled red cabbage—is sold spring through fall. \$7 for two; coopontherun.com



OKLAHOMA
Puffy Taco

Elote Cafe & Catering, Tulsa

This puffy tortilla gets only a quick dip in the fryer, so it's crisp on the outside and softer on the inside—perfect for holding a hearty mix of beef or chicken, sweet potatoes and caramelized onions. \$8.79 for two; 514 S. Boston Ave.; elotetulsa.com



OREGON
Pulpo Taco

Uno Mas Taquiza, Portland

Ask staffers to name a favorite dish and most of them will say this chile-and-lime-seasoned octopus taco. It's a specialty of the chef's seaside hometown of Acapulco. \$3.75; 2337 N.E. Glisan St.; unomastaquiza.com



PENNSYLVANIA
Pork Taco

Smoke Barbeque Taqueria, Homestead

This spot southeast of Pittsburgh makes only 10 types of tacos, and they're all amazing. The best one: smoked pork with apricot-habanero sauce and caramelized onions. \$4.75; 225 E. 8th Ave.; 412-205-3039



RHODE ISLAND
Miso Glazed Tofu Taco

Fugo food truck, Providence

The owners of this food truck are Dominican and Laotian, and their beloved taco was inspired by both backgrounds: perfectly crisp fried tofu and slaw in a corn shell. \$6 for two; Twitter for location: @FugoFoodTruck



SOUTH CAROLINA
The Warpig Taco

Cha Cha's Mexican Grill, Charleston

Pork lovers, rejoice! This flour tortilla comes with pig meat in three great forms: pork belly, braised pork and crumbled bacon—plus a scoop of black beans. \$3.75; 1409 Folly Rd.; chachasmexicangrill.com



SOUTH DAKOTA
Indian Taco

Cheyenne Crossing Store, Lead

For more than 30 years, regulars have had trouble finishing this loaded fry-bread taco by themselves. Luckily, it comes in a smaller "snack size." \$7-\$11; 21417 US Hwy. 14A; 605-584-3510



TENNESSEE
Fried Avocado Taco

Mas Tacos Por Favor, Nashville

This joint took its popular fried fish taco and made it vegetarian-friendly—with fried avocado in place of fish, topped with cabbage, red onion and a spiced yogurt sauce. \$3; 732 McFerrin Ave.; eatmastacos.com



TEXAS

SOCO Taco

Good 2 Go Taco, Dallas

The name of this taco stands for Southern comfort, and is it ever! The oversize breakfast taco is stuffed with sausage, egg, biscuit crumbles and a peppery white gravy. \$3.50; 1146 Peavy Rd.; good2gotaco.com

NY: MARIANO TAPIA, NC: BRAD OVERCASH, ND: MEZZALUNA AND JOHN BORGE STUDIOS, OH: ANGELA NEWMAN, OK: ROBERT BILLINGS, PA: JEFF PETRUSO, SC: JONATHAN BONCEK



UTAH
Grilled Pears and Roasted Beets Taco
 Taqueria 27, two locations

Chef Todd Gardiner put a new spin on veggie tacos with this combo. It's like a super-delicious salad (beets, pears and gorgonzola) on a tortilla. \$6 for two; taqueria27.com



VERMONT
Sweet Potato Taco
 The Mad Taco, three locations

You can watch chefs in the open kitchen smoke jalapeños and onions for this sweet potato-and-black bean taco. They also make more than a dozen hot sauces for the top. \$8 for two; themadtaco.com



VIRGINIA
Suadero Taco
 Fuego Cocina y Tequileria, Arlington

The recipe for this slow-cooked brisket taco, topped with jalapeño and onions, comes straight from Mexico. The chef's sister serves it at her Mexico City taqueria. \$7 for two; 2800 Clarendon Blvd.; fuegova.com



WASHINGTON
Taco Adobada
 Tacos Chukis, Seattle

The owner recently expanded his space, but it's still packed with customers clamoring for this favorite: rotisserie pork topped with pineapple, onions, cilantro and guacamole. \$1.90; 219 Broadway E.; 206-328-4447



WASHINGTON, D.C.
Carnitas con Salsa de Tomatillo Taco
 Oyamel Cocina Mexicana

Oyamel's team went south of the border for inspiration and came back with the key to tasty pork tacos: a 24-hour lime-and-orange juice marinade. \$4; 401 7th St. N.W.; oyamel.com



WEST VIRGINIA
Trout Taco
 Black Sheep Burrito & Brews, two locations

It's not hard to find a trout taco in West Virginia—it's the state fish—but here the trout is smoked and topped with a bourbon-bacon marmalade. \$4.25; blacksheepwv.com



WISCONSIN
Tacos de Tio Isreal
 Cempazuchi, Milwaukee

Fried fish is a favorite dish in Milwaukee, and here it gets a Latin twist: It's breaded in blue cornmeal and served in a corn tortilla with lime slaw and chipotle mayo. \$11 for three; 1205 E. Brady St.; cempazuchi.com



WYOMING
Beef Tongue Tacos
 Rendezvous Bistro, Jackson Hole

The chef took a trip to Baja and came back with the idea for this winner: tongue covered in onion, cabbage, watermelon radish and pickled jalapeño on a tortilla. \$9 for two; 380 S. Broadway; rendezvousbistro.net

Taco scouts:

Allison Arthur, *Dishing Magazine*, WY; Bob Batz, Jr., *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*; Mary Bilyeu, *The Toledo Blade*; Rachel Leah Blumenthal, *Eater*, Boston; Tim Carman, *The Washington Post*; David Cathey, *The Oklahoman*; Martha Cheng, HI; Ann Christenson, *Milwaukee Magazine*; Kate Conlow, IA; Rita Connelly, AZ; Carly Cooper, *Atlanta Magazine*; MaryEllen Fillo, *Hartford Courant*; Stefanie Gans, *Northern Virginia Magazine*; Peter Genovese, *The Star Ledger*, NJ; Sarah Gish, *Kansas City Star*, MO; Meredith Goad, *Portland Press Herald*, ME; Scott Gold, LA; Miriah Hamrick, *WV Living Magazine*; Sarah Baker Hansen, *Omaha World Herald*;

Eric E. Harrison, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*; Meg Heckman, NH; Rachel Hergett, *The Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, MT; Anne Hillerman, NM; John-Bryan Hopkins, AL; Katie Hunhoff, *South Dakota Magazine*; Jessica Karley, *Everyday Gourmet*, ND; James Patrick Kelly, ID; Alex Kiesig, ID; Rochelle Koff, *The Miami Herald*; Carol Kugler, *The Herald-Times*, IN; Shannon Kuhn, AK; Susan Laughlin, *New Hampshire Magazine*; Margaret Littman, TN; Mary Brown Malouf, *Salt Lake Magazine*; Ivy Manning, OR; Nicole Marshall Middleton, *Tulsa World*; Dana McMahan, Louisville, KY; Michele Meek, RI; Robert Moss, SC; Mark Nardone, DE; Sarah Nowicki, *Charlotte Magazine*, NC;

Melissa Pasanen, VT; Kat Robinson, AR; Kathryn Robinson, *Seattle Met*; Jeff Ruby, *Chicago Magazine*; Matthew Schniper, *Colorado Springs Independent*; Jonathan Scott, *The Oxford Eagle*, MS; Elina Shatkin, *Los Angeles Magazine*; Carol Shih, *D Magazine*, Dallas; Kristin Fuhrmann Simmons, ME; Claire Stanford, *Eater Minneapolis*; Carole Sugarman, *Bethesda Magazine*, MD; Mike Sula, *The Chicago Reader*; Joy Summers, MN; Patricia Talorico, *The News Journal*, DE; Brittany Weriges, *303 Magazine*, CO; Bethia Woolf, Columbus Food Adventures, OH; Jonathan L. Wright, *Reno Gazette-Journal*, NV

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