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Taco the Town
Tacos Al Pastor from America's Taco Shop

By Erica O'Neil Thu., Feb. 16 2012 at 12:00 PM
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Flickr- Backpack Foodie

Tacos al pastor, roasted schwarma-style over a vertical spit.

Tacos may very well be the perfect food, but let's face it, the standard Meximerican fare can get a bit stale after a while. **Taco the Town** is here to highlight some of the more unusual Mexican finds in the valley.

This week: **Al Pastor Tacos** from **America's Taco Shop**

¿Como se dice?: America's Taco Shop does two things, carne asada and al pastor pork, and lucky for you they do those two things very well. The al pastor is our personal favorite, and is the Mexican equivalent of the vertically roasted gyros-style meat kebab. But even though the cooking technique is similar, the flavor of the al pastor is completely Mexican. Smoky chiles, sweet pineapple, and bright red annatto spiced pork is thin-sliced and piled high in a corn tortilla. Order up a couple tacos, an ear of America's corn, and an ice cold cerveza, and dig in.

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America (of taco shop fame) surrounded by her franchise and food.

La Comida: Tacos al pastor are a Mexican adaptation of the Middle Eastern style of spit roasted schwarma meat. The long, vertical spit is loaded up with annatto-marinated pork and roasted vertically so that the outer layer attains a nice crispness while staying juicy.

Pineapple rings are also loaded up on the top of the spit and as it roasts the pineapple juices bathe the pork in acidity and sweetness. The final product is then shaved off the vertical spit similar to gyros from a Greek restaurant, and loaded into a taco.

El Sabor: The bright red tacos al pastor come topped with cilantro and onions, but we like to add a squirt of lime juice to brighten the flavor and maybe a bit of salsa for spice. The annatto marinade is responsible for the bright red color of the pork, and imparts an earthy flavor that adds depth to the smoky chiles and pungent onion, while the pineapple flavor lends a surprising amount of sweetness to the pork. At America's Taco Shop, they load each corn tortilla with meat too, so a couple tacos is more than enough to satiate your hunger. Or try a crispy vampiro topped with al pastor meat for something a little different.



Wikimedia Commons- Matt Saunders
Spit-roasted al pastor pork, with large pineapple removed off to the side.

Bring a bit of México to your kitchen: Unless you happen to have a vertical spit in your home, and in that case you certainly don't need a [recipe for al pastor](#) because you're a master, it's best to marinate your pork and rotate it on the grill. After it's done cooking you can then cut it into super thin pieces, and if you've done it right, the outside will be crispy and the inner meat will still be juicy.

Know of any Mexican gems in the valley? Reveal your family secrets in the comment section.

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