

ALI'S KITCHEN



Shrimp & Potato Street Tacos Take the Blue Ribbon

With garlic cilantro lime slaw, recipe wins “A Battle for the Best Tacos” at 2024 Potato Expo
Column and photos by Mike Carter, chief executive officer, Bushmans’ Inc. (and Ali’s husband, of course)

Like many recipes, this one comes with a story. This story starts back in the fall of 2020 and ends with a win in the Potato Expo “Street & Potatoes: A Battle for the Best Tacos” Cookoff Challenge, in Austin, Texas, this past January.

To be clear, this is my story, so I am going to tell it like I want, and
60 BC’T April

I will certify it to be about 81% true. Also, I’ll condense it in the interest of having room to print something interesting.

The story starts at the end of 2021 when the National Potato Council (NPC) and Potatoes USA were trying to figure out how to handle Expo in the middle of the craziness caused

by COVID-19. Steve Steich, a seed grower from Montana, and I were asked to participate in the cookoff

Above: Chef R.J. Harvey (right) of Potatoes USA announces Mike Carter (left) and Steve Reich (center) as winners of “Street & Potatoes: A Battle for the Best Tacos” for the pair’s Shrimp and Potato Street Tacos with Garlic Cilantro Lime Slaw made at the 2024 Potato Expo in Austin, Texas.

at Expo, in January 2022, which was held in California.

Steve is a friend, and I was serving on the Potatoes USA Executive Committee with him at the time. He and his wife, Jill, won the virtual cookoff in January 2021, so we entered as reigning champions, with me clutching Steve's coattails.

Steve and I jumped at the chance to compete in the 2022 cookoff, submitted our grocery list to the NPC staff a week in advance and were ready to compete against two other teams.

Unfortunately, the day before I left for Potato Expo, I came down with Covid. Then, Steve came down with Covid during the meeting in California, leaving a recipe, and some groceries with no one to prepare the meal.

FILL-IN'S WIN IT ALL

Holley Alexander from NPC scrambled and asked R.J. Andrus, and Jared Balcom to fill in for us, and they won the contest. From there, they went on to defend their title in 2023 and were poised for a "threepeat" in 2024.

I love those guys, but they were getting a little cocky. With that said, I didn't hate their "beer in the cooler" contract rider, but it was time for Steve and me to step in and stop their winning streak.

The 2024 contest was graciously sponsored by The Little Potato Company, and the rules were simple. Make street tacos incorporating The Little Potato Company potatoes in 35 minutes.

Steve found an old family favorite shrimp taco recipe, and we adjusted it to fit the parameters of the competition. The results were a

victory, bragging rights and delicious shrimp and potato tacos!

I think there were two things that helped us in the completion. First, we used an Instant Pot to cook the potatoes before we crisped them up in a pan, which greatly reduced our cooking time.

The other thing that helped was the fact we picked shrimp while the other two teams went with steak. In a competition, it's always good to be a little different! Also, contrary to popular belief, we did not bribe the judges.

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INGREDIENTS:

Garlic Cilantro Lime Sauce

- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions
- 1/2 cup cilantro leaves
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- juice of 2 limes
- 1/2 cup sour cream or full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup water (if needed, to thin sauce)

Shrimp Taco Spice Mix

- 2 tsps. each chili powder and cumin
- 1/2 tsp. each onion powder and garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper (more or less to taste)
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt

Stuff for the Shrimp Tacos

- 1 lb. shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed
- 2-3 cups shredded green cabbage
- 8 small tortillas (corn or flour)
- 2 avocados
- 1/4 cup Cotija cheese
- lime wedges for serving

Stuff for Potato Filling

- 3 lbs. Little Potato Company potatoes
- Olive oil to cover the bottom of the pan

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DIRECTIONS

Potatoes: Dice potatoes and cook in an Instant Pot for 4 minutes. Remove and fry in pan with olive oil until crisp. Add shrimp taco spice at the end to taste.

Sauce: Pulse all the sauce ingredients in a food processor or blender until mostly smooth. Add water if needed to thin.

Slaw: Toss some of the sauce (not all) with the cabbage. Use the leftover sauce to top the tacos.

Shrimp: Pat the shrimp dry with paper towels. Toss the shrimp in a small bowl with the spice mix to get it coated. Heat a drizzle of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shrimp to the hot pan and sauté for 5-8 minutes, flipping occasionally, until the shrimp are cooked through.

Assembly: For the prettiest and

easiest-to-eat assembly, go in this order: smashed avocado, slaw, and shrimp. Finish with Cotija cheese, lime wedges, and extra sauce.

We also topped the street tacos with a simple homemade Salsa Roja Recipe using the following:

SALSA ROJA

- 1 lb. tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 small white onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, chopped - use a Serrano pepper for a bit more heat!
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 0.13 cup chopped cilantro
- Juice from half a lime
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 0.13 teaspoon cumin (optional, not traditional, more Tex-Mex)
- Salt to taste

Put the mixture in a food processor and hit pulse a few times until you get the consistency you like. **BCT**

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