

SPICE OF THE MONTH

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July's spice is taco seasoning!

Someone very wise once said, "Show me a person who says they don't like tacos, and I'll show you a liar." A truer statement has perhaps never been uttered.

So, what exactly is a taco? The National Taco Council offered this, in a 1972 issue of *The L.A. Times*: "It is popularly believed that the word 'taco' came from the word 'ataco' or 'atacar', which means stuff – and stuff they have." Professor Jeffrey Pilcher, who has made the study of tacos a lifelong obsession, claims in *Smithsonian Magazine* that tacos date back to the 18th century, when silver miners needed a portable food they could carry with them to work. In fact, Pilcher says that the word "taco" is not derived from "atacar," but from the name of the miners' small, wrapped explosive charges that mimicked the shape of their lunches. And food historian Lynne Olver tells us on her Food Timeline that the origins of the taco are impossible to identify, as with any food that developed out of convenience and necessity, from available ingredients.

The taco made its U.S. debut in the early 20th century. A newspaper reported that tacos were served at a local luncheon in 1904, and a taco restaurant – L.A.'s El Cholo Restaurant – debuted in 1931. In 1962, a small food stand named Taco Bell opened its doors in Downey, California, expanding to become a nationwide chain over the next decade.

The taco seasoning in this kit comes from Penzey's. It is a rich, aromatic blend, including cocoa, corn flour, cumin, garlic and onion powders, paprika, oregano, paprika, allspice, salt and pepper. Try it in one of the recipes we've provided, or let yourself be inspired to create your own delicious dish!



**Croton
Free
Library**

All books listed here are available to check out from the Westchester Library System!

Our sources:

- Food Timeline: Mexican and TexMex food history: foodtimeline.org/foodmexican.html#tacos
- "Moments in Taco History" from *Texas Monthly*: texasmonthly.com/food/moments-in-taco-history/
- *The Oxford Companion to Food* by Alan Davidson
- Taco Bell®: Our History: tacobell.com/history
- "Where Did the Taco Come From?" from *Smithsonian Magazine*: smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/where-did-the-taco-come-from-81228162/

The recipes in this kit are:

- Chipotle & Ancho Chile Dry Rub from the *America's Test Kitchen Family Cookbook* (p. 458)
- Mrs. Obama's Breakfast Tacos from *The World Central Kitchen Cookbook* by José Andrés (p. 110)

See our cookbook collection for additional info & recipes, like:

- Eggs Baked in Black Beans from *Brunch: 100 Recipes from Five Points Restaurant* by Marc Meyer and Peter Meehan (p. 6-7)

What did you make with your
taco seasoning?

Post it on social media with the hashtag
#CrotonSpiceClub and tag us,
or send a photo & description to
ref@crotonfreelibrary.org!

Taco seasoning purchased from Penzey's.