

## RECIPES

### Fajitas, a Mexican favorite!

In Mexico, fajitas are called *arracheras*, and are often priced with expensive cuts like filet mignon and ribeyes. Unfortunately, in the U.S. most restaurants serve over-tenderized, over-marinated versions of the real thing, which should have nothing more than a sprinkle of lime juice, a dash of salt and pepper, the kiss of mesquite smoke, and perhaps some beautifully caramelized onions. The recipe is below, but if you are interested in learning more about this dish please see my short blog on fajitas.

### Ingredients

2 pounds skirt steak, outside cut, if possible

Powdered tenderizer, unseasoned or with as little seasoning as possible

Salt and black pepper to taste

3 tablespoons lime juice

1 dozen hot, flour tortillas

guacamole

*pico de gallo* (traditional relish of chopped tomatoes, onions, serrano chiles, and cilantro)

Your favorite salsas

### ***The optional onions:***

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large white onion, cut into thin slices

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1 clove minced garlic

½ teaspoon dried thyme

2 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro

### Directions

**1. Tenderize and season the meat.** If using tenderizer, apply it just before you start the coals. To do this, sprinkle it over one side and drive it into the meat by puncturing it all over with a fork. Better yet, use the Jaccard hand tenderizing machine or a similar product. This mimics the action of a machine tenderizer but, as it is not nearly as aggressive it does not ruin the texture. Turn the meat over and repeat on the other side. Salt and pepper the meat to taste.

**2. Start the fire.** Start a fire using either mesquite charcoal or wood, and place a grill 3 - 5 inches above them. The coals will be ready within a few minutes after the flames subside, when they are at their hottest. Before putting the meat on, brush the grill quickly with the end of a towel dipped in cooking oil to keep the meat from sticking.

**3. Grill the meat.** To grill the meat, place it on the oiled grill and allow it to cook for about 2 ½ minutes, then turn and repeat on the other side. Depending on the heat of your coals and the distance from the grill you may need to turn the meat again and cook another minute or two. If you plan to serve the fajitas in a sizzling hot skillet, make them a little less well-done than you want them as they will continue to cook in the pan.

**4. Prepare the optional onions.** If you want to serve the fajitas with the onions, begin to prepare them well before you light the coals. I suggest you cook them an hour or two or even a day before you begin the steak. They will keep well in the refrigerator. To do so, heat a large skillet over medium heat, add the olive oil then the onions and salt and toss thoroughly. Cook the onions, stirring frequently, until they are well caramelized and golden brown. To keep them from burning turn the heat down as necessary. This should take about 25 to 40 minutes. Just before the onions are done, add the garlic, thyme, and cilantro and cook two minutes more. Scrape the onions into a bowl and reserve.

**5. Finish and serve the fajitas.** When the fajitas are finished, remove them from the heat, place them on a chopping board, and allow them to rest for 2 - 5 minutes. This will allow them to absorb their juices so that it will not all run out when the meat is cut. In the meantime, heat an iron skillet over high heat until it is very hot, but do not get it so hot that it might break. Also, place the tortillas, guacamole, *pico de gallo*, and salsa on the table. Slice the meat against the grain as described above, mix it with the reserved onions, if using them, and place the combination into the piping hot skillet. Immediately pour the lime juice over the meat. Serve the platter of sizzling fajitas, making sure you use kitchen mitts to protect your hands from the heat and something like a small chopping block under the pan to protect your table surface.

Serves 4.