

Tacos!

The best, in a nice restaurant or in back of a grocery. Mmm, ingredients.

p/20

## Yo no quiero Taco Bell

These joints bring authentic, fresh flavor to their tacos

CINDY AUGUSTINE  
cindy.augustine@metro.us

**ROUNDUP** Scouring the city for the best tacos made this East Coaster long for the West. That's not to say that you can't find great tacos in NYC—and the list below sites the best—but the notion of an authentic taco from a true taqueria seems near impossible in this sea of cement, taxis and gloomy weather. Still, the fare served up at the locales below might just make you feel like breaking out that bikini and running for the border. Or at the very least, you'll eat a damn good taco and leave the rest to your imagination.

### Esquina

106 Kenmare St., 646-613-7100  
www.esquinanyc.com

Average price per taco: \$3  
★★★★★

Variety is the spice of life, and choosy diners have their pick of the hot spot brasserie, casual taqueria or the good old takeout window to get some of the best tacos around (the taqueria's tacos are bigger and cheaper, served on a six-inch corn tortilla). Standouts include the nopales y huevos (grilled cactus, scrambled eggs, pico de gallo and salsa verde). The brasserie offers chicken, steak, veal and pork, along with a smattering of accompaniments and a hefty list of tequilas.

### Mercadito

179 Ave. B, 212-529-6490  
100 Seventh Ave. So., 212-647-0410

Average price for four tacos: \$14  
★★★★★

Life doesn't get much better than an empty stomach, a plate of Mercadito's crispy beer-battered fish-of-the-day



MERCADITO is small on space and big on flavor, including their fresh fish tacos, above.

tacos—Estilo Baja (with Mexican style cole slaw and chive-habanero aioli)—and an icy Dos Equis to wash it all down. Chef Patricio Sandoval's Mexican upbringing is apparent in his menu's authenticity, yet the small-plates menu reflects more of the city's trend of sharing. Another winner: the camaron—shrimp tacos with avocado and roasted garlic-chile chipotle mojo.

### Tehuitzingo Deli and Grocery

695 10th Ave., 212-937-0343  
Average price per taco: \$2.50

★★★★★

New Yorkers know that culinary gems are hiding around nearly every corner of the city, and Tehuitzingo is no exception. This seemingly ordinary Mexican deli is merely the entryway to some of the most authentic tacos in the city. Gringos best brush up on their español before ordering, though the English menu keeps things easy. There is little in the way of vegetarian offerings (and no fish

tacos), but the meat is tasty and plentiful, and choices range from goat meat and beef tongue to pork ear and sausage with potato. And \$10 will get you just about every one of those.

### Diablo Royale

189 W. 10th St., 212-620-0223  
www.diabloroyale.com

Average price for two tacos: \$15  
★★★★★

This restaurant's devilish formula for a great taco is simple: Start with a good homemade corn tortilla, pick your poison, and top it with radish, lettuce and lime. The outcomes range from pollo (barbecued chicken with fresh onions, jalapeño and cilantro) to al pastor (roasted pork and pineapple) to atun (sushi-grade tuna seared rare with guacamole). The red and black decor, renovated bar and killer margaritas make this West Village haunt a repeat offender for delivering satisfying results.