

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 15 minutes
- Total Time: 30 minutes
- Recipe Intensity / Skill Level: Easy (Beginner-Friendly)
- Heat Intensity: Mild-Medium (Adjustable to taste)

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Equipment Needed

- 12-cup standard muffin tin
- Large skillet
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- 3.5 to 4-inch round biscuit cutter (or a clean, wide-mouth glass)
- Non-stick cooking spray

Ingredients List

For the Taco Cup Shells & Filling

- Large Flour Tortillas: 6 large (burrito-sized) flour or corn tortillas
- Ground Beef: 1 lb (450g) lean ground beef (85/15 or 90/10 works best)
- Taco Seasoning: 1 packet (about 1 oz / 28g) low-sodium taco seasoning
- Water: 1/3 cup

- Refried Beans: 1/2 cup canned refried beans (black or pintos)
- Shredded Cheese: 1 1/2 cups Mexican blend cheese (Shattered Cheddar & Monterey Jack)
- Salsa: 1/2 cup chunky tomato salsa or pico de gallo
- Cooking Spray: Non-stick olive oil or vegetable spray

Optional Fresh Toppings

- Sour Cream: 1/2 cup
- Guacamole or Avocado: 1 diced avocado or 1/2 cup fresh guacamole
- Fresh Cilantro: 1/4 cup finely chopped
- Jalapeños: 1 fresh jalapeño, thinly sliced (for extra heat intensity)
- Lime: 1 lime, cut into wedges
- Diced Tomatoes: 1/2 cup fresh Roma tomatoes

Step-by-Step Instructions

PREP & BROWN SERVE	ASSEMBLE CUPS	BAKE & MELT	TOP &
(Skillet: 10m) →	(Muffin Tin: 5m) →	(Oven: 15m)	→ (Fresh Garnishes)

Step 1: Prep the Oven and Pan

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Generously spray a standard 12-cup muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray to ensure the tortilla shells slide out easily after baking.

Step 2: Cut the Tortilla Rounds

1. Lay your flour tortillas flat on a clean cutting board.
2. Using a 3.5-inch to 4-inch round biscuit cutter or a wide-mouth glass, cut 2 rounds out of each tortilla, giving you 12 rounds total.
3. *Tip:* Microwaving the tortilla rounds for 10–15 seconds makes them pliable and easy to press into the tin without tearing.

Step 3: Cook the Savory Beef Filling

1. Place a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon until browned throughout.
2. Carefully drain off excess grease.
3. Lower the heat to medium. Add the taco seasoning and 1/3 cup of water. Stir well and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes until the sauce thickens and coats the beef evenly. Remove from heat.

Step 4: Assemble the Taco Cups

1. Press one tortilla round firmly into the bottom and up the sides of each muffin cup.
2. Spread about 1 teaspoon of refried beans at the bottom of each tortilla cup. This creates a savory anchor and prevents the cup bottom from getting soggy.
3. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of seasoned ground beef over the refried beans in each cup.
4. Top each cup with 1 teaspoon of salsa.
5. Finish by generously sprinkling 1 to 2 tablespoons of shredded cheese over the top of each cup.

Step 5: Bake to Crispy Perfection

1. Transfer the muffin tin to the preheated oven.
2. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes at 375°F (190°C), or until the edges of the tortilla shells are golden brown and crispy, and the cheese is fully melted and bubbling.
3. Remove from the oven and allow the cups to cool in the tin for 3 to 5 minutes so they firm up.

Step 6: Top and Serve

1. Use a fork or butter knife to gently lift the crisp taco cups out of the muffin tin.
2. Top each cup with a dollop of sour cream, fresh guacamole, chopped cilantro, and sliced jalapeños.
3. Serve warm with fresh lime wedges on the side!

Recipe Intensity & Flavor Profile Breakdown

Intensity Metric	Rating / Level	Notes
Preparation Difficulty	Low (1/5)	Great beginner recipe; excellent project to make with kids.
Cooking Intensity	Medium (2/5)	Quick stovetop browning followed by short oven baking.

Intensity Metric	Rating / Level	Notes
Spice / Heat Intensity	Adjustable (1/5 to 4/5)	Base recipe is mild. Add hot salsa or fresh jalapeños to elevate heat.
Texture Profile	High Contrast	Crunchy baked edges paired with warm, cheesy, tender filling.

Nutritional Information

Servings per recipe: 6 (2 Taco Cups per serving)

Per Serving (2 Taco Cups - Base Recipe without extra toppings):

Nutrient	Amount per Serving	% Daily Value*
Calories	340 kcal	—
Total Fat	16 g	21%
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	7 g	35%
<i>Trans Fat</i>	0.5 g	—
Cholesterol	55 mg	18%
Sodium	620 mg	27%
Total Carbohydrates	28 g	10%
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	3 g	11%
<i>Sugars</i>	2 g	—
Protein	20 g	40%
Calcium	180 mg	14%
Iron	2.5 mg	14%