

IN SEARCH OF GOOD FOOD | MARTY ROSEN

Bazo's fish taco: hot, delicious, guaranteed

Louisvillians love their fish sandwiches.

But take a piece of crisp fried fish, wrap it in a warm tortilla rather than a squishy bun, and the initial response is likely to sound like, "Eeek! What's that? A fish taco?!"

"It's been an uphill battle to convert people to fish tacos," said Joe Buonadonna, owner of Bazo's Fresh Mexican Grill, which offers a full range of taco fillings (and burritos and other related fare) but occupies a special place in my culinary heart for its fish tacos.

Buonadonna touts his fish tacos the old-fashioned way — with a guarantee. "I tell people, 'If you don't like it, I'll give you your money back.' In three years, I think I've had three people who asked for a

refund."

Culinary historians say fish tacos originated in the coastal fishing villages of Baja California, where street vendors still peddle tacos stuffed with fried fish right off the boats. A couple of decades ago, fish tacos started swimming north and east, eventually becoming the quasi-official civic food of San Diego (in the mid-'90s, when the San Diego Chargers lost to the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl, a mayoral wager between the two cities was paid in fish tacos) and gradually making inroads in the heartland.

The Bazo's fish taco is made of tilapia, according to Buonadonna. Fillets are hand-cut into 2-ounce portions, dipped in batter and fried to



By Bill Luster, The Courier-Journal

Bazo's fish taco is made of tilapia, which is dipped in batter and fried to order. The tacos are always piping hot and grease-free.

order — which means they're always piping hot, crisp and grease-free.

Then they're double

wrapped in warm tortillas, topped with a dollop of crunchy cabbage and drizzled with a slightly tangy sauce of Bu-

onadonna's invention.

I love fish sandwiches, myself. And that's exactly what a fish taco is. Sprinkle it with a bit of lime, and you have as fine a fish sandwich as you could hope for. Heck, order three, get yourself a bit of guacamole, some salsa fresca, a few corn chips and a bottle of beer, and for a few bucks you'll feel as if you'd won the Super Bowl.

Bazo's Fresh Mexican Grill is at 323 Wallace Ave. in St. Matthews. The restaurant is open daily 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Call (502) 899-9600 for information.

Is there a food or cooking ingredient you love? E-mail freelance columnist Marty Rosen at cjdining@gmail.com.