



Grains of truth about **TORTILLAS**

Definitions

A tortilla is an unleavened flatbread or pancake made either of corn or wheat flour, water, vegetable shortening and a little salt. They are the plate, envelope or folder surrounding an array of delicious fillings. The tortilla can be wrapped around your choice of fillings, used as a food scoop or served plain, hot or cold. You can place anything you desire into a tortilla and have a quick meal or snack; scrambled eggs for a breakfast burrito, hot dogs and cheese for a quick wrap or maybe just some peanut butter and jelly. Even certain leftovers—you can wrap them in a tortilla, heat in the microwave and enjoy!

History

The word “tortilla” comes from the Spanish word “torta” which means “round cake.” According to Mayan legend, tortillas were invented by a peasant for his hungry king in ancient times. Corn tortillas date back around 10,000 years before Christ and were made of native corn with dried kernel. When the Spanish brought wheat to the New World, flour tortillas were created.

A tortilla, once thought of as an ethnic food, has moved into the mainstream. Americans today are eating meatball tacos, corned beef on tortillas, tuna melt wraps, to name a few. Tortillas are not just for Mexican food anymore.

Availability

Tortillas can be found in supermarkets and a variety of food stores. Thanks to the widespread popularity of Mexican and Southwestern cuisine, Americans love tortillas.

The wheat flour tortilla is the fastest growing product line not only in the tortilla industry, but in the entire grain products industry. In 2000, the overall tortilla market in the United States was an estimated \$4 billion, representing a 57 percent growth rate over the past four years.

Storage

Tortillas are normally packed in polyethylene bags in counts varying from one-half dozen to three dozen. Shelf life can vary from as little as four days (for those sold and stored fresh) to as long as two months (for refrigerated products), depending on ingredient and preservative formulations.

Nutrition

Flour tortillas are a low-fat nutritious food and an easy, tasteful way to help reach the USDA's recommendation for five to ten ounces of grain foods a day. However, the USDA is recommending that half of those five to ten ounces be whole-grain, and one 7-inch corn tortilla is equal to one ounce.

Nutritional Chart		
Nutrient	Corn	Flour
Calories	58	159
Protein	1 g	4 g
Carbohydrate	12 g	27 g
Fat	1 g	3 g
Calcium	46 mg	61 mg

- Based on serving size—1, 6-inch corn tortilla and 1, 7-inch flour tortilla.

Preparation

TO HEAT:

- Microwave: Place tortilla between paper towels and heat on medium high for 20–30 seconds.
- Oven: 400°F; Place tortilla on the rack and heat for 3-4 minutes or wrap in foil and warm in oven for 10 minutes.

Recipes



CAMELIZED ONION QUESADILLAS

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| 1 tablespoon | olive oil |
| 1 medium | red onion, thinly sliced |
| 4 | green onions, sliced |
| 2 cloves | garlic, chopped |
| 1 teaspoon | ground cumin |
| ¼ teaspoon | dried oregano leaves |
| 1 tablespoon | lime juice |
| 4 large (10-inch) | wheat tortillas |
| 2 cups | reduced fat shredded cheese: a combination of cheddar, jalapeno, Monterey jack or other spicy cheese |
- Optional:** **Salsa, guacamole and sour cream**

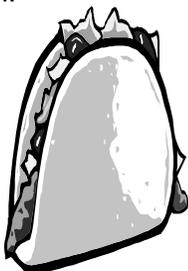
Preheat oven to 400° F.

Heat oil in skillet over medium heat and sauté onion and garlic until softened, stirring occasionally—usually about 10 minutes.

Stir in cumin and oregano. Remove from heat and stir in lime juice.

Place 2 tortillas on a baking sheet and spread the onion mixture equally on the two. Sprinkle with equal amounts of cheese. Top with remaining tortillas and bake for about 8 minutes until the edges are golden. Let stand 5 minutes and cut each into sixths with a pizza cutter. Garnish with salsa, guacamole and sour cream if desired.

Nutritional Analysis: Three wedges provides approximately: 382 calories, 21 g protein, 46 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 13 g fat (4 g saturated), 12 mg cholesterol, 110 mcg folate, 3 mg iron, 350 mg calcium, 227 mg potassium and 695 mg sodium.



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CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

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| 10 | corn tortillas |
| 8 ounces | light cream cheese, softened |
| ¼ cup | skim milk |
| 2 cups | cubed, cooked skinless chicken breasts |
| ½ cup | sliced green onions |
| 1 cup | shredded, low-fat Monterey Jack cheese |
| 10 ounces | enchilada sauce * |
| | (use mild, medium or hot) |
| 6 ounce | container frozen avocado dip, thawed |
| ½ cup | non-fat sour cream |

Pre-heat oven to 375°F.

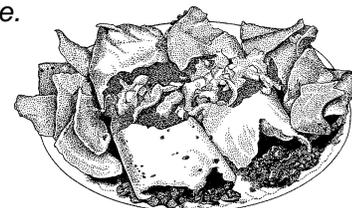
In a large bowl, combine cream cheese and milk. Stir in chicken, onions and one-half cup of cheese.

Heat tortillas on griddle. Spoon one-quarter cup filling down center of each warm tortilla; roll up. Place seam side down in un-greased 13 x 9-inch (3-quart) baking dish. Pour enchilada sauce evenly over tortillas; sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Bake in preheated oven 10 to 15 minutes or until bubbly. In a small bowl, combine guacamole and sour cream; spoon over warm enchiladas. Serves 10.

Nutritional Analysis: Each serving provides approximately: 234 calories; 16 g protein; 20 g carbohydrates; 2 g dietary fiber; 10 g fat (5 g saturated); 38 mg cholesterol; 34 mcg folate; 1 mg iron; 191 mg calcium, 203 mg potassium and 453 mg sodium.

- Enchilada sauce used was low in calories and fat.
- *Adapted recipe from the Tortilla Industry Association's web site.*



Wheat Foods
C O U N C I L

10841 S. Crossroads Drive, Suite 105
Parker, Colorado 80138
(303) 840-8787/Fax: (303) 840-6877
E-mail: wfc@wheatfoods.org
URL: www.wheatfoods.org