

## **The History of the Tortilla**

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The story of the tortilla starts on the Iberian Peninsula in the county of Spain. From 711 a.d. to 1492 a.d. the peninsula was dominated by Moors and Berbers of northern Africa who made a thin flat cake from ground chickpea and milled wheat flour. The Spanish called these cakes tortillitas which means, little tortes. Of course, the French took the torte to a whole new level.

Cultural Exchange took place when the Spanish came to the Americas. In Cortés' 1520 letter to King Charles V of Spain, he described the public markets: "This city has many public squares, in which are situated the markets and other places for buying and selling...where are daily assembled more than sixty thousand souls... and where are found all kinds of merchandise that the world affords, embracing the necessaries of life, as for instance articles of food...maize or Indian corn, in the grain and in the form of bread...."

The indigenous people of the Americas made unleavened flat bread from ground maize. In México their flat cakes were called *tlixcalli*, in Central América *pupusa*, and in South América *arepa*.

Traditional maize tortilla making starts with soaking the corn in lime water (calcium hydroxide) to remove the hull. After washing, the maize was ground with a stone mano and metate. Then the masa (dough) is patted into thin round cakes and cooked on a comal (griddle). The Spanish found that the Indian people of the Americas were using this process which today is called nixtamalization. This process unlocks proteins in the corn. Eating maize-based foods without nixtamalization or supplementation with legumes or meat leads to a nutritional deficiency known as pellagra.

Flour tortillas may have been an innovation by exiled Spanish Jews who may not have considered corn to be kosher, so they made tortillas using wheat brought from Europe. Many Jewish families — covertly practicing their faith or simply maintaining their traditions as Catholic conversos. Large numbers of conversos (converts) settled in northern Mexico to get as far from the Spanish Inquisition as possible. Flour tortillas became popular in northern Mexico, including what is now the American Southwest. After the annexation by the United States of former Mexican territories, flour tortillas continued being the regional staple.

According to the Tortilla Industry Association (TIA), the fastest growing sector of the baking business is tortilla manufacturing. U.S. annual sales of tortillas exceeds all other ethnic and special bread sales, including bagels, croissants, muffins, and pita bread. and are overtaking white sandwich bread as the nation's preferred food delivery platform"

Americans continue to crave Mexican food—so much so that they spend billions of dollars annually at quick-service restaurants like Taco Bell and Chipotle Mexican Grill and on Mexican foods at their local grocery store. Authentic Mexican restaurants and food product distributors continue to grow in the USA and world-wide. Corn tortillas are preferred in most of Mexico and flour tortillas in the U.S.A. Total retail sales in the United States are projected to amount to 6.03 trillion dollars in 2022.

Try this Masa Recipe for Flour Tortillas or Sopapillas

2 cups flour, 1 tbsp Lard or Corn oil, 1 tsp salt, 1 tbsp Baking Powder, room-temperature water. Mix ingredients to the consistency of pie dough and kneed gently and divide into golf ball size balls.

Roll to a flat round and thin cake—to keep them round, turn frequently

Bake on a Comal or iron skillet until it bubbles up and lightly browns. Flip the tortilla and brown the other side. Place in a dry dish towel and allow to cool.

Enjoy!

Go to Nuestra Herencia-KC to see a short video demonstration.

<https://www.facebook.com/NHKCRadio1/videos/2617914558478842>

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