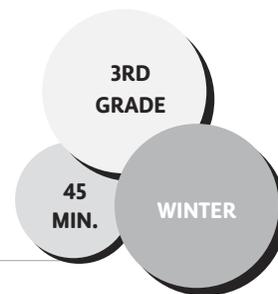


# Tortilla Time!

**THEME:** MAKING HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*How do the foods we eat get from the plant to our plate?*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Students will be able to distinguish whole foods and processed foods.
- ✓ Students will be able to prepare homemade tortillas.

## CONCEPTS

ingredients processed whole foods

### *Engaging the Classroom Teacher*

- Prior to the lesson, discuss whether there are other adults, such as parent volunteers, who are part of a culture where tortillas are prepared, and see if they'd like to help teach about this food.
- During Action Step 5, suggest that the teacher supervise as students are rolling or pressing their tortillas. Have the teacher help students take turns coming up and delivering their prepared tortilla to be cooked.

## LESSON DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students learn to distinguish between whole and processed foods by making corn tortillas from masa harina, and they learn

about the cultural tradition of tortilla making through listening to a read-aloud. This lesson can be taught in conjunction with *Get to the Source* for further exploration of whole versus processed foods. Or it can be taught with *Breaking Down Bread*, *Building Up Rocks* for further exploration of staple grains.

## MATERIALS

- Dried corn on the cob and/or a jar of corn kernels
- Empty bag of corn chips
- Tortilla ingredients (see recipe below)
- Mixing bowl
- Induction burner
- Extension cord
- Nonstick pan
- Cutting mats (2–3 for each group of students)
- Plate for each student
- Materials for cleanup
- *The First Tortilla* by Rudolfo Anaya (YouTube read-aloud)
- 4–6 rolling pins (optional)
- Grinder (optional)
- Mortar and pestle, with newspaper underneath (optional)
- Tortilla press (optional)

## PREPARATION

- › Find out if you have any students whose family members know how to make tortillas and, if so, invite them to teach the students how to press and cook tortillas.
- › Recruit a second adult, if possible, to cook the tortillas while you guide the students in an activity while they wait.

- › If you haven't made tortillas before, practice on your own to become familiar with the process, and address any challenges ahead of time.
- › Find a read aloud on YouTube of Rudolfo Anaya's *The First Tortilla* to show to students.
- › Set up a station with your induction burner and pan. If you have a mortar and pestle or grinder, set up a station where students can take turns independently grinding corn with these tools.
- › Follow the directions on your masa harina package to prepare the tortilla dough beforehand.
- › Divide the dough evenly for groups of 4–6 students to make one tortilla each. (A ball the size of a ping-pong ball will make approximately one 6-inch tortilla).

## Tortillas

**Yield:** 28 6-inch tortillas

3 cups masa harina  
 ½ teaspoon salt  
 2 cups hot water or low-sodium  
 veggie broth

- Mix flour and salt together in a bowl. Slowly add liquid while mixing with a spoon until dough forms into a ball. The dough should feel similar to playdough. If it's crumbly, add water, a tablespoon at a time, until it comes together. If it's too wet and sticking to your hands, add a tablespoon of masa harina at a time until it's smooth.
- Knead dough on a lightly floured surface until it is smooth.
- Wrap the dough, and let it rest for 30 minutes or up to 24 hours.

- Break off pieces of dough and roll into a small ball. Then between two sheets of plastic wrap, using a tortilla press, a pie plate, your fingers, or a rolling pin, press until the dough is 5–6 inches in diameter.
- On a hot plate, or large cast-iron skillet, cook a couple tortillas at a time over medium heat until they brown in spots—about 1 minute. Flip and repeat on the second side.

## ACTION STEPS

**1. Engage:** Explain to students that today you'll be talking about whole versus processed foods and getting to know corn a little better. Say, *Every day we typically eat a mix of some whole and some processed foods.* Show students the corn on the cob and the empty corn chip bag. Say, *Think in your heads which one of these is whole and which one of these is processed.* Then take a vote. Reveal the answers. **(5 min.)**

**2. Defining Whole Versus Processed:** Ask students to turn and talk to a partner to come up with a definition of what a whole food is versus what a processed food is. Share answers, and come up with definitions as a class. Ask, *Do you think the corn chips have been processed just a little bit or a lot?* Have students show you with their hands the extent to which they think the corn chips have been processed. Explain that the more steps a food undergoes and the more additional ingredients added, the more processed it is. **(5 min.)**

**3. Explain the Activity:** Tell students that today they're going to process corn to make a new food themselves: tortillas! Explain that Mexico and other countries in Central America have been making tortillas from corn for centuries. Ask students whether their families have a practice of making tortillas or using masa for other foods. Show students the jar of corn kernels and the

jar of masa harina. Ask, *How do you think the corn went from this to this? Discuss grinding the corn.* If you have a grinder or mortar and pestle, show these tools, and tell students they'll have the opportunity to use them soon. Then show students the prepared tortilla dough. Ask, *How do you think I processed the masa harina to make this dough?* Tell students about adding water, mixing, and kneading the dough. **(5 min.)**

**4. Model:** Model for students how to make a tortilla. Pinch off a ping-pong sized amount, and roll into a ball. If you don't have a tortilla press or rolling pins, show students how to press the ball with the palm of their hands until it's about six inches in diameter. Explain that once they're finished making their tortilla, they'll bring it up to you on their plate, where you'll cook it for them. **(5 min.)**

**5. Making Tortillas:** Pass out cutting mats, and provide groups of students with tortilla dough. If you have grinding tools, this is the time to invite students to practice using them. Heat up your nonstick pan as students begin pressing the dough. Cook the tortillas for one or two minutes on each side. Be sure students keep a safe distance from the burner as you cook their tortillas. You may want to allow students to eat their tortilla when they return to their seat while it's still warm or when everyone at their table has one. **(15 min.)**

**6. Enjoy!** Consider playing a read-aloud of *The First Tortilla* by Rudolfo Anaya to share more about the tradition of tortilla making and to keep students engaged once they've made their tortilla. **(5 min.)**

## REFLECTION

Have students discuss the following questions in small groups, then share with the class: **(5 min.)**

### Social and emotional learning

- *What was your favorite part of today's activity?*
- *How did you share with or help a classmate today?*
- *If you were able to share a personal food tradition today, how did it feel to share?*

### Check for understanding

- *How many steps did it take to go from corn on the cob to our tortillas?*
- *What are some words you would use to describe our tortillas' smell? Taste? Texture?*
- *What tips or tricks did we find for creating our tortillas?*

## ADAPTATIONS

**Tasting Extension:** Conduct a taste test comparing homemade tortillas with store-bought ones.

**Stations Variation:** Set up stations for students to learn more about the culture and history of tortillas. Create a geography station with maps where students compare a map of Mesoamerica with a map of present-day Central America and the US. Students must then identify which present-day countries were part of Mesoamerica. Create a second research station in which students watch a video about the history of tortillas and fill out a KWL chart, in which students share what they know, what they want to know, and what they've learned.

## **ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS**

English Language Arts Common Core State Standards

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1**

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.