

The Heritage Continues

Lesson #22: MAKING TORTILLAS

TIME

60 minutes

MATERIALS FROM TRUNK

Objects - mochete, tortilla press
Making Tortillas power point CD or transparencies

OTHER MATERIALS

Power point projector or overhead projector
Screen
Hot plate, pan, or electric frying pan
Bowls
Mixing spoons
Measuring cups
Board for rolling out flour, cutting board
Wax paper
Recipe ingredients
Clean up materials

TEACHER PREPARATIONS

If you plan to use the power point presentation check ahead of time that it is compatible with your computer equipment. For your convenience this presentation is also available on the transparencies included in the trunk and on the Society's web site at www.kshs.org.

Make a copy of the tortilla recipe located in the "Recipe" section of this manual.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- 1) identify traditional Mexican cooking equipment
- 2) prepare a type of Mexican food

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Food is one of the most prevalent elements of Mexican culture visible in America today. Although adaptations have evolved, tortillas--plain, buttered, or wrapped around a variety of fillings--are found on Mexican American tables at many meals.

In the corn-producing regions of southern Mexico tortillas are usually made from corn. In the northern areas of Mexico and in the areas of the United States where wheat is grown, flour tortillas are favored. Tacos, tostadas, enchiladas, and tamales are on menus of restaurants and fast food chains in every region of America. Many grocery stores in the

United States carry a wide variety of Mexican products and spices once considered exotic.

VOCABULARY

- **Comal** = Flat, round pan used to cook tortillas.
- **Metate** = A large porous rock used for grinding corn.
- **Mochete** = A small porous stone used for grinding spices.
- **Tortilla** = Flat, round pancake made of cornmeal or flour.

ACTIVITY

- 1) Introduce tortillas, what they are, and why they are important in the Mexican culture.
Food is a visible part of the Mexican culture. Tortillas are one part of the Mexican diet that are found throughout Mexico and the United States. Various adaptations occurred that affect what tortillas are made from and what they are filled with. They remain a staple item in a diets of Mexican Americans.
- 2) Show the power point presentation, Making Tortillas. Show the class the mochete and tortilla press from the trunk.
The principal use of the mochete is the same as the matate: grinding. It is smaller, however, and used mainly for grinding spices.
- 3) Have the students make tortillas following the recipe below. You may write the recipe on the board for the students to copy.

4 c flour
2 tsp salt
2 tsp baking powder
6 Tbls shortening
1 1/2 c lukewarm water

Mix dry ingredients. Add shortening, and mix well. Add water and mix. You may use the tortilla press or shape the dough into egg-sized balls, place on floured board, cover with wax paper, and let stand for 20 minutes. Dust board with flour and roll out dough. Place on hot grill for 2 to 3 minutes, turn to cook other side. Cool and fill with your favorite ingredients or place in plastic bag and refrigerate. Makes three dozen tortillas.

- OR -

4 c Masa Harina tortilla flour
2 c water

Combine tortilla flour with water; mix with hands while dough is moist but holds its shape (add more water if needed). Let stand 15 minutes. Divide dough into 24 balls. Dampen

dough slightly with water. Using a tortilla press or flat baking dish, press a ball of dough between sheets of waxed paper to a 6-inch round. Carefully peel off top sheet of paper. Place tortilla, paper side up, on hot ungreased griddle or skillet. Gently peel off remaining sheet of paper. Cook about 30 seconds or till edges begin to dry. Turn; cook until surface appears puffy. Repeat with remaining dough. Makes 24 tortillas.

- 4) Eat and enjoy! You may eat the tortillas plain or bring fillings for them.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

- 1) Try some of the additional recipes found in the "Recipe" section of this manual.
- 2) Visit a Mexican restaurant in your community. Ask for a tour of the kitchen and the processes used in preparing the dishes.
- 3) Have the students use their imaginations when creating fillings for tortillas. Put together a recipe book of class ideas.
- 4) See the complementary lesson in this manual: "Reflecting on Food."
- 5) Show the class the food section of the video *The Hispanic Face of Kansas* (counter #124). Discuss how food is an important part of the Mexican American culture, how this tradition is passed on to future generations, and the types of food that are part of this tradition.