

RECIPES

Flour Tortillas

The following is my favorite recipe, with some variations, for flour tortillas. If you wish to learn more about the art of preparing flour tortillas, perhaps with an eye to creating your own Best Flour Tortilla recipe, please go to [my blog on the subject](#).

Introduction

The following recipe is meant to serve as a standard from which readers are encouraged to experiment based on their own taste and dietary requirements, particularly in terms of the type and amount of fat. Some recommended adaptations follow the recipe.

Ingredients

1 3/4 cups all purpose flour
1/4 cup cake flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons good quality lard or other fat (see above)
2/3 cup water

Directions

1. Make the dough. Mix the flours and salt, either in a bowl or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. Heat the water and lard or other fat over low heat or in a microwave until it has melted. Gradually stir the liquid into the flour and form into a dough by hand, or pour into the processor with the motor running. The result should be a dough that is neither wet nor dry and crumbly, but if you must err do so on the side of leaving the dough a little too damp. If it seems much too wet add a little more flour; if it is too dry add a little more water. Knead the dough very briefly, then allow it to rest for 1 hour. Divide it into 14 pieces. Roll the pieces of dough into little balls between the palms of your hands, then cover them with a slightly damp towel, and allow them to rest for at least 15 minutes, and up to an hour and a half. This will allow the gluten to relax and make them easier to shape.

2. Form the tortillas. With a rolling pin, roll the dough into rounds 6 1/2 to 7 1/2 inches in diameter.

3. Cook the tortillas. Heat a large, heavy skillet or griddle over medium heat. Since stove settings vary you will have to experiment to find the best heat for your particular situation. (If you have a laser thermometer, I have found the ideal temperature to be 425 - 475 degrees). When the skillet or griddle has preheated, place one of the rolled dough pieces on it. Within about 20 - 30 seconds it should start to bubble and some little brown spots begin to form on the bottom. Flip the tortilla over and cook another 20 - 30 seconds. By this time it should start to puff a little more, and the other side will develop light brown spots. Flip the tortilla again at which time it should immediately begin to puff, sometimes into a large, nearly round ball. You can encourage the tortilla to puff by lightly passing a spatula over the top surface of the tortilla, called "tickling" it, while it is cooking. When the tortilla has fully expanded, remove it from the heat and place it in a tortilla warmer or wrap it in a thick towel. As you proceed, adjust the heat based on the above description. For example, reduce the heat if after about 20 - 30 seconds the bottom of the tortilla is beginning to char, or raise it if nothing much has happened. Repeat the process for the remaining tortillas.

Makes 14 tortillas

Adaptations

Northern Mexican-style flour tortillas

To make authentic, northern Mexican flour tortillas, use 4 tablespoons lard or rendered beef fat instead of three.

Tex-Mex tortillas

To make thicker, Tex-Mex style tortillas, add ½ teaspoon baking powder with the flour and salt, divide the dough into 10 pieces, and roll them to a diameter of 6 ½ to 7 ½ inches.

Very thin flour tortillas

Divide the dough into 16 pieces and roll to 7 ½ inches.

Tortillas for burritos or chimichangas

To make tortillas for *burritos* or *chimichangas*, divide the dough into 8 pieces and roll them to a diameter of about 9 inches. This makes a fairly small burrito, but this is about the maximum size of home griddles and skillets. If your equipment permits larger sizes, divide the dough into 6 pieces and roll out to about 12 inches.

Extra fatty, silky-smooth tortillas

For this adaptation, simply add 1 tablespoon vegetable oil to the Northern Mexican alternative above.

Flour tortillas with extra rich flavor

Substitute butter for ½ or all the lard in the recipe.

Low fat flour tortillas

For those interested in making decent flour tortillas with a minimum of fat, prepare the basic recipe with 1 tablespoon of canola or olive oil. Mix the oil with very warm tap water before adding it to the flour. The result is a very soft tortilla with a nice, light texture, and low fat content.