

Homemade Corn Tortillas

Fresh homemade tortillas burst with corn flavor and are worlds better than store-bought.

by **Matthew Fairman**



CORN TORTILLAS

Makes 18 tortillas

Using a clear pie plate to press the ball of dough into a 5½-inch circle in step 3 makes it easy to see the size of the circle as it expands. You can also use a tortilla press or a flat-bottomed skillet. You can find masa harina at your grocery store in the international aisle or near the flour. We recommend stacking the cooked tortillas in a damp dish towel and microwaving them, still wrapped, for 2 minutes before serving. You can also store them in a tortilla warmer (see “Tortilla Gear”).

3 cups (12 ounces) masa harina

2 teaspoons table salt

2–2½ cups warm water

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon vegetable oil, divided

1. Whisk masa harina and salt together in medium bowl. Stir in 2 cups warm water and 2 tablespoons oil with rubber spatula until combined. Using your hands, knead dough in bowl until it is soft and tacky and has texture of Play-Doh. If necessary, add up to ½ cup more warm water, 1 tablespoon at a time, until proper texture is achieved. (You can test for proper hydration by gently flattening a golf ball–size piece of dough with your hands. If many large cracks form around edges, it is too dry.)

2. Divide dough into 18 equal portions, about a scant 3 tablespoons (1½ ounces) each. Roll each portion into smooth ball between your hands. Transfer dough balls

to plate and keep covered with damp paper towel. Cut open seams along sides of 1-gallon zipper-lock bag, leaving bottom seam intact. Spray inside of bag lightly with vegetable oil spray; wipe excess oil spray from bag with paper towel.

3. Heat remaining 1 teaspoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until just smoking. Using tongs, wipe skillet with paper towels. Place 1 dough ball in center of prepared bag. Fold top layer of plastic over ball. Using clear pie plate, press dough flat into thin 5½-inch circle.

4. Peel top layer of plastic away from tortilla. Using plastic to lift tortilla from bottom, place exposed side of tortilla in palm of your hand and invert tortilla. Peel away plastic. Carefully flip tortilla into skillet and cook until bottom begins to brown at edges, about 1 minute.

5. Using thin spatula, flip tortilla and cook until second side is browned at edges, about 45 seconds. Flip tortilla again and press center and edges firmly with spatula so tortilla puffs, about 15 seconds.

6. Transfer cooked tortilla to tortilla warmer or wrap in damp dish towel. Repeat with remaining dough balls, lightly spraying bag with oil spray and wiping off excess as needed to keep tortillas from sticking. Serve. (If storing tortillas in damp dish towel, microwave for 2 minutes to rewarm before serving.)



Go to **CooksCountry.com/tacos** for a collection of taco recipes that call for corn tortillas.

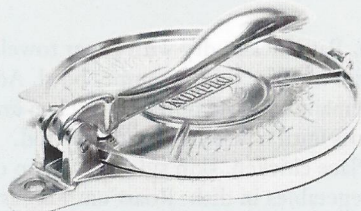


Rewarming Tortillas

Fresh corn tortillas are best eaten within a few hours of making them, but we understand that that's not always possible. You can wrap stacks of tortillas in plastic and refrigerate them for a few days; to reheat, quickly dip each tortilla in a bowl of water and reheat it over medium heat in a dry nonstick skillet for about 30 seconds per side.



KEEP 'EM WARM
Our winning tortilla warmer



IM-PRESSIVE
Our Best Buy tortilla press



NOT PUFFED = DENSE
Not pressed



PUFFED = TENDER
Properly pressed

Press to Puff

Toward the end of cooking each tortilla, we press on it with a spatula; this pressing releases steam in the tortilla and causes it to puff in the middle, which makes for a fluffier, less dense finished tortilla with a layered interior.

Tortilla Gear

Tortilla Warmer

Eating your tortillas fresh from the skillet sounds great, but it's not always practical. In fact, we found that the tortillas were much more tender and pliable if they were allowed to steam together in a tortilla warmer while we finished cooking the rest of the batch. Stacking the tortillas wrapped in a damp dish towel and then microwaving the stack for 2 minutes proved to be a suitable substitute for the tortilla warmer, but our favorite warmer—the **Imusa 12" Cloth Tortilla Warmer** (about \$14)—worked best, keeping the tortillas warm and pliable for more than an hour.

Tortilla Press

Our recipe is written so you don't need a special tortilla press—it calls for using a clear pie plate to press out the dough. But if you have a tortilla press, by all means use it. Our favorite affordable tortilla press is the **Norpro Cast Aluminum Tortilla Press** (about \$12); our testers liked its compact, easy-to-store shape and light weight. Since it's not as heavy as other presses (many of which are cast iron), it does require a little trial and error to get the pressing motion just right, but our testers got the hang of it after a few tries.

How Much Water Is Enough Water?

Our recipe calls for a range of water: 2 to 2½ cups. So how do you know how much to use? First, add 2 cups of water to 3 cups of masa harina and hand-knead the dough until it's the texture of Play-Doh. Then, test the dough by flattening a golf ball-size piece; if a lot of cracks form along the edges, the dough needs more water.



TOO DRY



PERFECT DOUGH

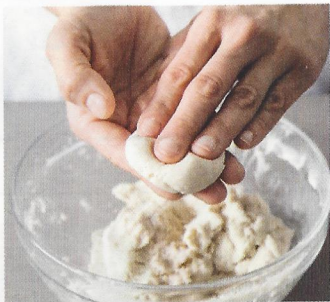
Step by Step



1. Mix and knead dough

Stir masa harina, salt, warm water, and oil together with a rubber spatula, then knead the dough until it is the texture of Play-Doh.

Why? To create a workable dough, everything needs to be fully incorporated.



2. Test hydration

Pinch off a golf ball–size piece of dough, roll it into a ball, and gently press it flat. A properly hydrated dough will not crack significantly when flattened.

Why? Proper hydration yields tender, pliable tortillas.



3. Portion dough

Divide and roll dough into 18 equal balls, keeping dough covered with damp dish towel.

Why? Equal portions yield uniform tortillas that cook in the same amount of time. Keeping the dough covered prevents it from drying out.



4. Prep bag

Cut sides from 1-gallon zipper-lock bag, spray inside lightly with oil spray, and wipe off excess.

Why? The greased bag provides a tidy nonstick surface for pressing the dough flat.



5. Press dough

Use a clear pie plate (or a tortilla press) to press each round into a flat 5½-inch circle.

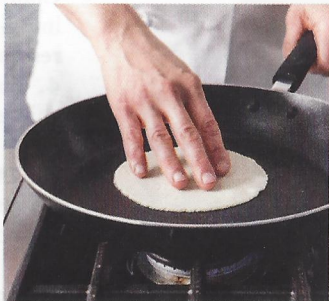
Why? The clear plate lets you see the tortillas as they're pressed, allowing you to make any necessary adjustments to ensure an even size and thickness.



6. Remove tortilla

Peel top layer of plastic away from tortilla. Lift tortilla from under bottom layer of plastic and gently invert onto your palm.

Why? Raw tortillas are very fragile; this is the gentlest way to handle them.



7. Cook on first side

Carefully flip tortilla into preheated skillet and cook until edges begin to dry out and bottom begins to brown on edges, about 1 minute.

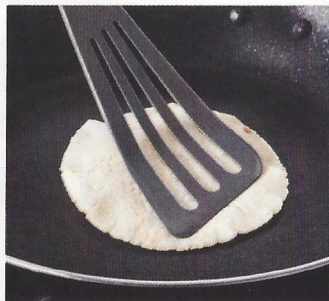
Why? For the best texture, the first side should be set and just beginning to brown, but not dry.



8. Cook on second side

Flip tortilla and cook until second side begins to brown at edges, about 45 seconds.

Why? If not fully cooked, the inside of the tortillas will be dense and wet. If overcooked, it can be dry and leathery. We're shooting for the sweet spot.



9. Press to puff

Flip again and press with spatula on center and edges of tortilla; this causes the tortilla to puff.

Why? Puffing gives the finished tortillas a tender, light texture. Tortillas that don't puff are dense in comparison.



10. Keep warm

Wrap cooked tortillas in damp dish towel or place in tortilla warmer until ready to use.

Why? These tortillas are much more tender and pliable if they are kept in a steamy environment after cooking.