

EXTENSION CONNECTION – The Versatile Tortilla

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Q. I see lots of tortillas in the grocery store. Do they have nutritional value? How do I use them?

A. The word “tortilla” comes from the Spanish word “torta” which means “round cake.” Corn tortillas date back to ancient times and were made from native corn. When the Spanish brought wheat to the New World, flour tortillas were created. One 7-inch corn tortilla is equal to one whole-grain bread serving on the Food Guide Pyramid. Tortillas can be made from wheat flour or corn. Look at tortillas as flat bread that can be wrapped around your choice of fillings, used as a tasty food scoop or served plain, hot or cold.

Nutritionally, one 7 inch corn tortilla provides 60 calories, 1 gram protein, 12 grams carbohydrate, 1 gram of fat and 44 mg of calcium. A 7 inch flour tortilla contains 115 calories, 3 grams of protein, 20 grams of carbohydrate, 2.5 grams of fat and 44 mg of calcium. Choose a whole wheat tortilla to get at least 3 grams of dietary fiber.

To heat tortillas in the microwave: Place tortilla between paper towels and heat on medium high for 20-30 seconds.

To heat tortillas in the oven: Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Place tortilla on the rack and heat for 3-4 minutes or wrap in foil and warm in oven for 10 minutes.

Store tortillas in the refrigerator after purchase. Tortillas can be frozen for up to 3 months in air tight containers, defrosted and reheated for later use.

For some quick meal ideas using tortillas consider these ideas:

- Ham and cheese stackers: Brush flour tortilla with Dijon Mustard; top with thinly sliced ham, sprinkle with reduced fat cheese. Repeat layers. Bake until cheese melts. Cut in wedges.
- Leftovers can be transformed instantly when wrapped in a tortilla. Eat hot or cold.
- Spread lightly with butter, cinnamon and sugar and heat in microwave.
- Fill the tortilla with scrambled egg for a breakfast burrito or tuna salad for lunch.
- Roll up diced veggies (tomato, onion, green pepper) and a slice of cheese. Microwave 30 seconds.
- Consider a tortilla as dessert. Slice an apple, sprinkle a little cinnamon, roll up and heat in microwave.