

# GRADE 4 LESSON PLAN

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Recommended for  
**Grade 4**

## History in the Making The Tortilla

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### Note to the Teacher:



Goals for the **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup>  
(NWC) campaign/curriculum:

- Healthy foods or meals *can* taste delicious.
- Foods represent the many cultures of your students.
- Students experience positive social, psychological and nutritional benefits when eating with family and friends.
- Students can learn basic culinary skills that are applicable in their home settings.

This lesson, which connects to history/social science, language arts, and mathematics, explores a common ethnic food base (tortilla) that is used in many different Mexican recipes. It can be integrated into Social Studies units studying Mexican and Spanish California and the Southwest. The lesson can also be used with other recipes from the **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> program such as: "Burritos Buenos", "Soft Chicken Taco", and the "Mexican Layered Tostada". Look for these and other related non-cook recipes in the Appendix.



**Culinary Skills Developed:** measure, mix, knead, roll, pat

**Key Vocabulary:** tortilla, flour, shortening, water, baking powder, salt, patting, corn

### Teacher Preparation



- Review lesson, recipe, shopping list and equipment list in packet. Each day's activities require about 60 minutes of class time.
- Make copies of *Home and Family Connection* letter (included in this lesson in English or Spanish).
- Prepare word cards (included in this lesson).
- Make poster or overhead transparency of recipe.
- Collect world map.
- Collect chart paper.
- Collect picture cards depicting foods using a tortilla (photos, magazine pictures).
- Include ample amount of each ingredient per group of children.
- Give early notice to Cafeteria support personnel regarding upcoming unit. (See *Cafeteria Connection* handout included in this lesson).
- Use available bilingual paraprofessionals or partner English language learners with English-speaking role models as needed in the lessons.
- Throughout the unit, students will have many opportunities for participation either in written, oral or a hands-on form that will provide educators on-going assessment in several curricular areas.

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## Family Connection

Check if any parents have experience making tortillas and would be interested in helping with the cooking activity. Send a letter, make phone calls, or contact through bilingual paraprofessionals, if necessary. You may also wish to send a letter home asking parents for some cooking equipment, bowls, etc. Inform parents that a family letter about the **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> Program will be sent home on the first day of the lesson. Send home the parent brochure about the **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> program included in the Appendix.

## School/District Connection

- Inform your principal about the upcoming cooking event. Describe how the lesson involves families and how it creates an integrated curriculum for your students. Invite your principal to visit your classroom during the week.
- Collaborate with your principal, school Food Service Director, and other colleagues to plan a school-wide family meal.
- Write a letter to your Food Service Director or contact your school cafeteria manager and ask for creative suggestions involving your tortilla lesson. He/She may have information about ingredients or supplies as well as being a resource for a tortilla-based menu. (See *Cafeteria Connection* page for more ideas).

## Historical Background of the Tortilla

The tortilla, or "little cake" as named by the Spanish, actually began as a bread of the Mexican and Central American Indians. The Indians made these small cakes from a corn paste called "masa", which was prepared by mashing cooked corn on a flat stone called a "metate". The masa dough was then shaped into large, round cakes and cooked on a pan over an open fire. With the arrival of the Spaniards, wheat flour was introduced as another way to make tortillas. New and flavorful ingredients (grated cheese, olives, onions, meat, lettuce) were also introduced, and the resulting tortilla became a base for such dishes as enchiladas, burritos, tostadas, quesadillas, and other well-known recipes. Today, both corn and flour tortillas are used in traditional Mexican recipes.

## Day One: (approximately 60 minutes)

- Distribute the *Home and Family Connection* page to students. (Have bilingual paraprofessionals available for English language learners). Explain what you will be doing during the week with the **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> Program.
- Discuss the pleasures and benefits of eating family meals, and how the recipe you will be preparing in class can easily be adapted for a meal or snack at home. Choose one or more of the homework ideas on the *Home and Family Connection* page for the week. Remind children to read the page with their families and discuss preparing the

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recipe at home.

completed after today's lesson.

## Group Activity:

- Give a historical background about the tortilla (see beginning of lesson). Review the ethnic origin of the flour tortilla, and locate it on a map to help trace its route into California. Talk about possible foods the Spaniards may have brought with them, which helped to develop the tortilla into some of the dishes listed on the chart.
- In cooperative groups, distribute small samples of both the corn and flour tortillas. Allow students to touch, taste, and smell the tortillas. Have students discuss their findings in their groups. Encourage comparisons between the two types of tortillas. Ask students how a tortilla can be similar to or different from a slice of bread.
- Conclude the day with a K-W-L chart about tortillas (K=What we KNOW, W=What we WANT to know, L=What we have LEARNED). Make 3 columns on your chart, and mark one letter at the top of each column. Complete the K and W sections of the charts as a class.
- Tell students that tomorrow they will be making flour (or corn) tortillas in class.

## Day Two: (approximately 90 minutes)

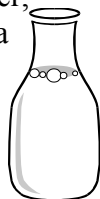
- Ask students as partners or in groups to discuss and review the historical background of the tortilla. Refer to the K-W-L chart as well. Emphasize that the L=Learned part of the chart will be

- Review *A Primer of Basic Kitchen Skills* (included with the Appendix).
- Discuss ingredients necessary for making tortillas. Show each ingredient and display the corresponding word card. Distribute paper plates, bowls, cloths, and measuring supplies. Post the recipe chart or overhead.
- Give an ample amount of every ingredient to each cooperative group. Allow students to touch, taste, and smell the ingredients before mixing. Ask students where some of these ingredients may have come from (wheat, animals, vegetables), referring to the ingredients that were available in early California times.
- Refer to the recipe chart or overhead. Read the recipe with the students, emphasizing each step and how each ingredient is incorporated.
- Demonstrate making the tortilla dough, using the authentic technique of mixing only with your fingers. Model the technique for "kneading" the dough, if making the flour tortilla.
- Allow students to complete the recipe in their groups, utilizing their "team leaders" or adult volunteers who have experience in making tortillas.
- Remind students that the dough for the flour tortilla will need to "rest" in a covered bowl for 20 minutes. You may wish to read some related literature during this time (see end of lesson for list of related books).

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- After the dough has "rested", ask students how they should divide the dough equally among group members. Discuss proportions and use vocabulary pertaining to fractional parts (one-fourth, one-third, etc.) to assist children with the dividing. Show how to roll the dough into a ball, push down with heel of hand, then pick up and pat between hands. Show the "patting" word card, and have students practice the patting motion with you. (Describe how early Californians patted the dough and stretched the edges with their fingertips at the same time). Ask any adult volunteers who have experience making tortillas to model their tortilla-making techniques.
- Remind students that their tortillas may form holes, and show how they may place their tortillas on the paper plates and push the holes together with their fingers.
- Supervise the cooking of tortillas. Tortillas may be eaten plain, or with a topping of your choice (such as butter, grated cheese or salsa). Serve with a glass of milk and piece of fruit to round out the snack.



## PLEASE NOTE:

- Today's tortillas can be refrigerated for use in another **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> recipe such as Burritos Buenos, Soft Chicken Taco, or Mexican Layered Tostada. You can have students write their names on their paper plates, stack the plates of cooked tortillas, and refrigerate them for the next recipe.
- Conclude the lesson by discussing the

possibilities for making tortillas at home. Ask students how they might add to or change the recipe for a new family tortilla recipe (see *Home and Family Connection* letter). Remind students to complete their homework assignments regarding today's recipe.

## Day Three: (approximately 60 minutes)

- Review yesterday's cooking lesson by completing the "L--Learned" portion of the K-W-L chart. Students can use experience from class and from home.
- Check to see that the "W=What we WANT to know" section has also been addressed. Leave the chart posted for the Personal Reflection Writing Assignment and any related Expansion Activities.

## Personal Reflection Writing Assignment

- Have students refer to the K-W-L chart and write one paragraph for each section reflecting about their tortilla-making experience. Pose the following prompts:
  - For Paragraph One - What did you already know about tortillas? For Paragraph Two - What did you want to know more about? For Paragraph Three - What did you learn about tortillas?
  - At the end of writing time, ask students: "Why did the class learn about tortillas?" (to show relevance).

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## Days Four and Five: Ideas for Expansion Activities

### Arts/Crafts -

Students can research early Mexican California attire. Students can design article of clothing and hats from large grocery bags, butcher paper, and colored construction paper. The class can then organize a fashion show.

### Writing Activity -

Discuss the importance of journal writing and diaries by early explorers, settlers, and Mission Padres for documenting history, detailing day-to-day life, and record-keeping. Show examples of journals or diaries, if possible (see related books list). Have students write a journal or diary about the tortilla making. How did they make tortillas? How did they taste? Did they like/dislike them? Could they eat them every day? (California Indians often ate their corn cakes three times a day). Will their families like them? Journals can be written and shared in partners, groups, or kept personal between student and teacher.

Note: Model a class example first. Provide sentence frames as examples for English language learners (i.e. Today we made \_\_\_\_\_ first we \_\_\_\_\_.)

### Poetry -

Have students brainstorm tastes, smells and textures of the cooked tortillas. Make a chart with the symbols next to the words for English language learners. (i.e. picture of a mouth for the word "taste", picture of a finger for the word "touch", picture of a nose for the word "smell", picture of an eye for "looks like"). Using the words,

have students write descriptive Haiku, Cinquin, Couplet, Limerick, or other forms of poetry. Have students illustrate poems, and allow them to share aloud in groups.

### Oral Language -

Have students write a chant about tortillas. Instruct them to mimic the tortilla "patting" motion in their chant. Students can perform their chants in groups, with background motions and voice accompaniments.

### Music -

Students can write a song about tortillas using a common tune such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Record or videotape your "Tortilla Singers".

### Recipe Writing -

Have students make a class book of different tortilla recipes. Ask students: Can tortillas be made with alternative ingredients? In what creative ways can a tortilla be used in making new recipes? (Example: a tortilla ice cream cone). Your class book can also include family tortilla recipes from the *Home and Family Connection* homework assignments.

### Health/Nutrition -

Discuss where the tortilla fits into the Food Guide Pyramid. What do people in different cultures eat instead of tortillas? What other foods are in the Breads and Grain group? Discuss the importance of calcium in the diet and relate corn tortillas as a source of calcium. Discuss good sources of calcium such as milk and dairy products and beans.

### Creative Writing -

Read some Tall Tales to your class. Ask your students "How did the tortilla become

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flat?" Chart some Tall Tale suggestions for how they think the tortilla became flat. Show a hamburger bun in comparison to a flat tortilla. What do they think happened?

**Gardening Connection** - Discuss how tortillas were originally eaten with frijoles (beans) and roasted chili pepper because they were bland-tasting. Have your students grow different herbs in a windowsill or outdoor herb garden. See if students can incorporate the herbs into the tortilla recipe to make it taste better. Have students grow corn to make corn tortillas or research other vegetables that could be grown to compliment the tortilla.

### **School Food Service Collaboration**

Develop a bulletin board for the cafeteria. Display your recipe using arts/crafts, pictures, poems, or songs to help other students learn about tortillas, their origin, and use.

**Field Trip** - Take the class to a tortilla processing plant, a Mexican restaurant kitchen, or your school's cafeteria kitchen for a demonstration on how they prepare tortillas. Using a Venn diagram, have students compare the techniques of making their own class tortillas (flour or corn) with those demonstrated.

### **Science:**

- **Physical Science** - Design a make-believe tortilla pan that could run off a battery. Describe and illustrate how you would make the electrical pan using batteries, wires, circuit boards, switches, etc.
- **Life Science** - Make a food chain chart detailing the ingredients of a burrito (which includes the tortilla base).

Begin with the plant items as the primary food source at the bottom of the "chain".

- **Earth Science** - Research the geological regions of wheat production in the United States. Prepare a map, which contains a legend or a key. Describe why these regions are so well suited for producing grain.
- **Investigation and Experimentation** - Use the tortilla recipe and make tortillas of various shapes, sizes, and thickness. Estimate the weight, length, circumference or perimeter of each tortilla. Use measuring tapes, rulers, balances, and other instruments to record actual measurements. Construct a chart or graph, which represents the data. Write several accompanying questions for students to answer by interpreting your chart or graph.

### **Related Books**

- The Tortilla Factor* by Gary Paulsen  
*The Well-filled Tortilla Cookbook* by Victoria Wise  
*The Tortilla Book* by Diane Kennedy  
*Amelia's Notebook* by Marissa Moss (for journals and diaries)  
*Jalapeno Bagels* by Natasha Wing (describes joining cultures to create a new recipe)  
*Hill of Fire* by Thomas P. Lewis (describes eating corn cakes as part of an everyday meal)  
*Linnea's Windowsill Garden* by Christina Bjork and Lena Anderson (use with gardening expansion idea)  
*How My Parents Learned to Eat* by R. Friedman (a family blends eating styles and traditions)

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*The Bread Book, All About Bread and  
How to Make It* by Carolyn Meyer  
*Knead It, Punch It, Bake It, Make Your  
Own Bread* by Judith and Evan Jones

## Teacher Notes:



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**Tortilla**

**Flour**

**Shortening**

**Water**

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**Baking Powder**

**Salt**

**Patting**

**Corn**

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# FLOUR TORTILLAS (makes 8)

## Shopping List:

- Ready made flour and corn tortillas (for sampling)
- Ingredients below
- Paper plates and napkins
- Individual moist towelettes (available in most drug stores)

## Equipment List:

- Hot plate, fry pan or large skillet
- Spatula
- Bowls for mixing dough (1 per group)
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Light cloths for covering bowls

## Flour Tortilla Recipe

2 cups flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3 Tablespoons Manteca (lard), butter, margarine, or shortening  
Lukewarm water (about 3/4 cup)  
Oil or non-stick spray for cooking



1. Place flour in a bowl and slowly add each ingredient (except the water) by mixing with your fingers.
2. Sprinkle the water in small amounts into the mixture, and continue mixing together with your fingers until it holds together like a dough. (You may not need all the water).
3. Knead the dough on a lightly floured surface by turning and pushing with the "heel" of your hand (about 10 times). Place dough in a bowl and cover lightly with a cloth for 20 minutes.
4. Divide dough into equal parts, making each part into a small ball. Roll the ball gently in your hands, then push flat on a lightly floured surface. Pick up and "pat" flat into a tortilla.
5. Heat a small amount of oil (or non-stick spray) in a pan over medium heat. Using a spatula, cook tortilla until golden brown on both sides.

## Additional Recipe -- Corn Tortilla

2 cups dehydrated masa flour  
1 ¼ cups warm water



1. In a bowl, mix masa flour with enough of the warm water to make dough hold together well. Shape into a smooth ball. Divide into 12 equal pieces for 6-inch tortillas or 24 equal pieces for 4-inch tortillas.
  2. Lay a piece of wax paper over each piece of dough and, using a rolling pin or heavy cylindrical object, flatten the dough into a tortilla shape.
  3. Repeat until dough is gone.
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NOW WE'RE COOKING!®

Home and Family  
Connection  
Grade 4



**How often does your family sit down and eat together?** Enjoyable, healthful food is one of life's greatest pleasures, especially when shared with our family and friends. Unfortunately, today's busy family schedules result in fewer and fewer meals prepared and shared with one another.

Thanks to a program at your school called **Now We're Cooking!**® your child is (or will be) learning safe, simple cooking skills that can be used at home to help prepare snacks and family meals. Many skills taught in this program also reinforce other subjects your child is learning, including social studies, math, writing, and the arts.

## What You Can Do

On the back is a recipe your child will be preparing in class. Join your child in reading the recipe, gathering the ingredients, and cooking it at home. No matter how simple or fancy the meal, time spent eating with your children may be the best time to talk with them, share in their lives, and pass on cultural traditions.

## Homework Extensions

Your child's teacher may be assigning one or more of the following assignments.

1. Math/Estimating - How much of each ingredient would you need to make enough tortillas for 100 people? Show your thinking in words and numbers.
2. Art/Language - Make tortillas at home with your family. Have each member make his/her dough into a shape or object. Spend time guessing what each person's tortilla looks like before eating. Try to remember some of the pictures by drawing them.
3. Writing - Write a letter to your teacher, principal, or Food Service Director/Coordinator about your tortilla making experiences at school and at home. Include what you have learned and add an illustration.
4. Family Recipe - Does your family have a favorite tortilla or tortilla-based recipe (burritos, tostadas, quesadillas). As a family, write the ingredients and the directions into a recipe that can be shared with the class.

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Lukewarm water (about 3/4 cup)  
Oil or non-stick spray for cooking



1. Place flour in a bowl and slowly add each ingredient (except the water) by mixing with your fingers.
2. Sprinkle the water in small amounts into the mixture, and continue mixing together with your fingers until it holds together like a dough. (You may not need all the water).
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# GRADE 4 LESSON PLAN

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Now We're Cooking!<sup>®</sup>  
Cafeteria Connection  
Grade 4



**How often do families find time to sit down and eat together?** Enjoyable, healthful food is one of life's greatest pleasures, especially when shared with family and friends. Unfortunately, today's busy family schedules result in fewer and fewer meals prepared and shared with one another.

Thanks to a program at our schools called **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup>, our students are (or will be) learning safe, simple cooking skills that can be used at home to help prepare snacks and family meals. Many skills taught in this program also reinforce other subjects.

The cafeteria is another place that children can share a meal with friends. We would like to connect the **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> experience with eating in the cafeteria.

## What You Can Do

On the back is the recipe that students will be preparing in class. You could:

1. Provide some or all of the ingredients.
2. Help us obtain the ingredients and bill us for them.
3. Serve this recipe or a similar purchased menu item the week we are preparing it in class. That will be the week of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Visit our classroom and give a short nutrition lesson on tortillas and where they fit into the Food Guide Pyramid.
5. Visit our classroom and give a nutrition education lesson on tortillas and what other foods on the school lunch menu serve the same function in a lunch.
6. Provide a taste testing experience for our class with various kinds of tortillas (corn, wheat, whole wheat, low-fat, fat free, chips, flavored.)
7. Plan a school-wide fiesta with tortillas on the menu. Our class will help decorate and serve.
8. Let us put up a bulletin board in the cafeteria about tortillas and our cooking experience.
9. Anything else you can think of to enhance our **Now We're Cooking!**<sup>®</sup> classroom activity

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

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