



## Corn or flour tortilla? Choose best of either

### I love Mexican food, but I've often wondered which is the better choice, nutrition-wise: flour or corn tortillas?

To be honest, there are so many types of tortillas available today — both corn and flour — that it would be unrealistic to offer a blanket assessment on which kind is better.

If you look hard enough, you'll find some claims that corn tortillas are better, purportedly because they have fewer calories, less fat, and are made from whole grain. But you can't be certain of any of that — both corn and flour tortillas can be made in such a wide variety of ways that you simply can't be sure of what you're eating unless you take a careful look at the label.

So, probably the best route to take is to first choose which type of tortilla you prefer for a particular recipe. For example, most people say corn tortillas are an absolute must for enchiladas, while flour tortillas are more commonly used for burritos or wraps.

Then, put on your detective's hat to determine which of the many choices you have within each broad category to find the most healthful tortilla for your particular need.

It's not difficult. Start with choosing a tortilla that's made from the whole grain. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that half the grains we eat be whole grains, but most Americans don't get near attaining that goal. Whole grains contain the

entire grain — bran, endosperm and germ; in refined grains, the bran and germ are removed, along with fiber and a host of nutrients and micronutrients, including folic acid, magnesium, vitamin E, phenolic acids and other phytochemicals.

For corn tortillas, check to see if "whole-grain corn" or "whole-grain cornmeal" is first in the ingredients list. For flour tortillas, look for "whole wheat" first on the list. Don't be fooled by terms such as "stone-ground" or "multigrain" — those foods may or may not be whole grains.

Then, take a look at the fiber content. Most people don't consume as much fiber as they should (25 to 38 grams a day), so this is a great opportunity to add fiber to your diet. Whole-grain foods usually have more fiber than those made with refined grains, anyway, but there still could be wide variation in the fiber content of the tortillas you choose.

Also, examine the Nutrition Facts labels for saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and calorie content. Again, you'll find wide variations — look for tortillas with lowest amounts.

Sometimes, the best option is to choose a smaller, 6-inch tortilla instead of a larger size. As with any food, portion size is key in determining the most healthful choice.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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