

Tortilla in a Bag

Background

Bread may be the ancestor of all prepared foods. The first bread was made in Neolithic times, nearly 12,000 years ago. It was probably made by crushing grain and mixing it with water. The dough was then baked in the sun or laid on heated stones and covered with hot ashes. The Hopi of New Mexico still make a traditional bread, called “piki bread,” by mixing juniper ash with cornmeal and spreading it on a hot stone. Then they lift the paper-thin layer from the stone by rolling it like a jelly roll.

Bread can be unleavened or leavened with yeast. When flour comes in contact with water and remains idle for a period of time, it begins to rise. In modern processes, yeast is added to aid in the rising, but even without yeast, dough will begin to ferment, and the resulting gases will cause the dough to rise. The Egyptians were the first to discover that this process would produce a light, expanded loaf. The Egyptians also invented a closed oven in which to bake the bread.

The ancient Hebrews were in such a hurry to get away from their Egyptian captors that they made their bread without leavening. Today Jewish people celebrate Passover, their escape from the Egyptians, with unleavened bread—matzo. Bread without leavening also represents truth in Jewish tradition, because bread that is unleavened retains the true flavor of the grain from which it is made.

Traditionally, people made bread from whatever grain grew best in the area where they lived. Wheat, rye, corn, barley, millet, kamut and spelt are some of the grains used around the world. Wheat flour is preferred because of its gluten content. Gluten is what gives bread its elastic quality.

Bread is such a powerful food that ancient Egyptian governments controlled its production and distribution as a means of controlling the populace. In France the shortage of bread helped start the French Revolution.

Wheat originated in the Middle East and came to our continent with European settlers. Before that, maize was the grain used for bread-making in the Americas. Maize is what we now call corn, but the word “corn” actually means any kind of grain. For centuries, maize was used to make a flat bread that we know as tortillas. According to Mayan legend, tortillas were invented by a peasant for his hungry king. The first tortillas were made over 12,000 years ago. Today they are also made with wheat.

Among native Mexicans, tortillas are commonly used as eating utensils. In the Old West, cowpokes realized the versatility of tortillas and used tortillas filled with meat or other foods as a convenient way to eat around the

P.A.S.S.

Grade 4

Reading—1.4; 3.2,3; 5.2

Writing—1.5,6; 2

Oral Language—1.1,2,3;
2.1,2,5; 3.1,2

Math Process—1.1,2; 4.4

Math Content—4.4;5.1

Science Process—1.1,2;
3.1,2,3; 4.3,4; 5.2,4

Social Studies—1.1; 2.1,2;
3.2; 4.2

Materials

assorted breads, especially flat breads like tortillas, pita bread and any others you can find in the grocery store

assorted grains and flour made from different kinds of grains

dictionaries

world map

ingredients for tortillas (See recipe—storage bags flour, baking powder*, shortening, hot tap water, salt)

campfire.

The average American eats 199 tortillas each year. In 2000, Americans consumed about 85 billion tortillas (not including tortilla chips).

Flour tortillas are a low-fat food and contain iron along with other B vitamins. They have about 115 calories with 2-3 grams of fat per serving. Corn tortillas are a low-fat, low-sodium food and contain calcium, potassium and fiber. An average serving contains about 60 calories with 1 gram of fat.

Social Studies / Language Arts

1. Read and discuss background.
 - As a class, students will brainstorm and list different kinds of bread. Write the names of the breads on the chalkboard.
2. Show students some of the different kinds of breads and grains you have brought to class, and ask students to name them if they can.
 - Students will compare and contrast the breads, especially the leavened and unleavened breads.
 - Students will brainstorm and list reasons that people in different parts of the world eat different kinds of food. Why do people in different families eat different kinds of foods?
3. Hand out the student worksheet, “Breads Around the World.”
 - Students will work in groups or individually to complete the worksheet.
 - On a map of the world, students will place map pins showing where the different breads described on the worksheet originated.
4. Students will research to find the origins of the following grains used in bread making: wheat (Middle East), rye (southwestern Asia), corn (Americas), barley (Ethiopia), millet (Africa or Asia), kamut(Egypt or Asia Minor) and spelt (Middle East).
5. After students have made tortillas in a bag (recipe included with this lesson), students will write instructions in their own words to share with their parents or another class.
6. Students will write invitations to parents for a multicultural night, and serve a variety of breads from around the world. Assign students to report on the origins of the different kinds of breads.

Science

1. Discuss what makes flat (unleavened) breads different from leavened breads. Experiment with leavening, as follows.
 - Mix one batch of dough using water, flour and yeast and another batch using flour and water only.
 - Students will hypothesize what will happen with each batch, then observe them over several hours and record their observations.
2. Make Tortillas in a Bag (See recipe on Student Worksheet B).
3. The tortilla recipe included with this lesson calls for baking powder, which provides a small amount of leavening. Have some of your students make the tortillas with leavening and some make them without.

- Students will compare texture, flavor, appearance, etc.
5. Substitute whole wheat flour for white flour in the tortilla recipe.
- Students will compare flavor, texture, appearance, etc.

Extra Reading

- Anaya, Rudolfo, Amy Cordova and Enrique R. Lamadrid, *The First Tortilla: A Bilingual Story* (English and Spanish Edition), University of New Mexico, 2007.
- Chavarria-Chairez, Becky, Julia Mercedes Castilla, and Anne Vega, *Magda's Tortillas / Las Tortillas de Magda*, Children's, 2000.
- Dooley, Norah, and Peter J. Thornton, *Everybody Bakes Bread*, Carolrhoda, 1995.
- Green, Emily K., *Grains: The New Food Guide Pyramid*, Bellweather, 2006.
- Hayes, Joe, and Antonio Castro Lopez, *The Day it Snowed Tortillas / El Dia Que Nevaron Tortillas: Folktales told in Spanish and English*, Cinco Puntos, 2003.
- Morris, Ann, and Ken Heyman, *Bread, Bread, Bread*; HarperTrophy; 1993.
- Paulsen, Gary, *The Tortilla Factory*, Harcourt, Brace, 1995.

Vocabulary

barley— a cereal grass with flowers in dense spikes; also : its seed used especially in foods (as soups and cereals), or as feed for livestock

bread—a baked food made of flour or meal

fiber— mostly indigestible material in food that stimulates the intestine to move its contents along

gluten—a tough elastic protein substance in flour especially from wheat that holds together dough and makes it sticky

kamut—an ancient relative of durum wheat

leavened— raised (dough) with a leaven, or material (as baking powder) used to produce a gas that makes dough or batter rise and become light

maize—Indian corn

rye—a hardy annual cereal grass widely grown for grain and as a cover crop

spelt—a kind of wheat

tortilla—a thin round of unleavened cornmeal or wheat flour bread

unleavened—made without leavening.

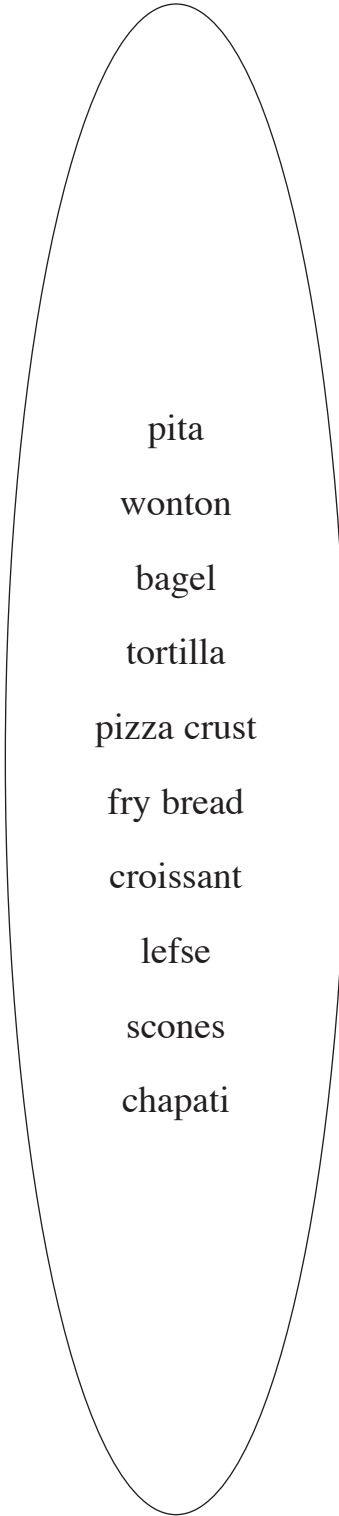
wheat—a cereal grain that can be made into a fine white flour used mostly in breads, baked goods (as cakes and crackers), and pasta as (as macaroni or spaghetti) and that is used in animal feeds

yeast—a one-celled fungus that produces alcohol during the process of fermentation; a commercial product containing living yeast cells that is used mostly as a leaven especially in baking bread

Name _____

Breads Around the World

Write the name of the bread in the space provided next to its description. Use a dictionary if you need one.



1. _____

Asian noodle dough dumplings filled with spiced meat. They are boiled in soup or fried and eaten as a side dish.

2. _____

Corn or wheat dough patted into thin, flat rounds and fried on a hot griddle. They are daily bread in a country on the same continent as the US.

3. _____

Chewy baked rolls with a hole. They are often eaten with cream cheese or other tasty toppings. Polish immigrants brought them to the US.

4. _____

Pocket breads from the Middle East that are round, flat and hollow on the inside.

5. _____

Flaky, tender, crescent-shaped rolls from the land of the Eiffel Tower.

6. _____

Popular Italian pie that began as a leftover created from extra bread dough.

7. _____

Small round breads fried in hot oil. They are made by the thousands for POWs.

8. _____

Flat, chewy rounds of bread served with curries or with peanut butter and honey, cheese and tomato, or just butter. From the country of the Taj Mahal.

9. _____

Like biscuits, but cut into big, thick triangles and baked. Great with tea. From a country on the island of Great Britain.

10. _____

Flat bread made from mashed potatoes, flour and liquid. Fried on a griddle and great with brown sugar and butter rolled inside. Scandinavians created it.

Name _____

Tortillas in a Bag

Ingredients (for four tortillas)

1-qt storage bag
1 1/2 c flour
1 t baking powder
3 T shortening
1/2 c hot tap water
1/4 t salt (or to taste)

1. Place flour, salt and baking powder in bag. Close and shake just a few shakes to mix.
2. Add shortening and reclose the bag. Work bag with hands until the mixture looks crumbly and there are no large pieces of shortening visible.
3. Open the bag, and add the hot tap water. knead in the bag until the dough is one large piece and the sides of the bag come clean.
4. Take the dough out of the bag, and divide into four pieces. Put the pieces of dough on the table, and lay the bag on top of them. Let the dough rest for 15 minutes.
5. After resting time, roll or pat the dough into eight- to 10-inch circles. If dough is too sticky you may add a little more flour. Place the circles on a griddle or frying pan heated to medium or medium high, and cook until dark brown spots appear. Turn and cook on the other side until brown.
6. Fill tortillas with ground beef, beans, salsa, cheese and lettuce to make burritos, if desired, or spread with butter or peanut butter.