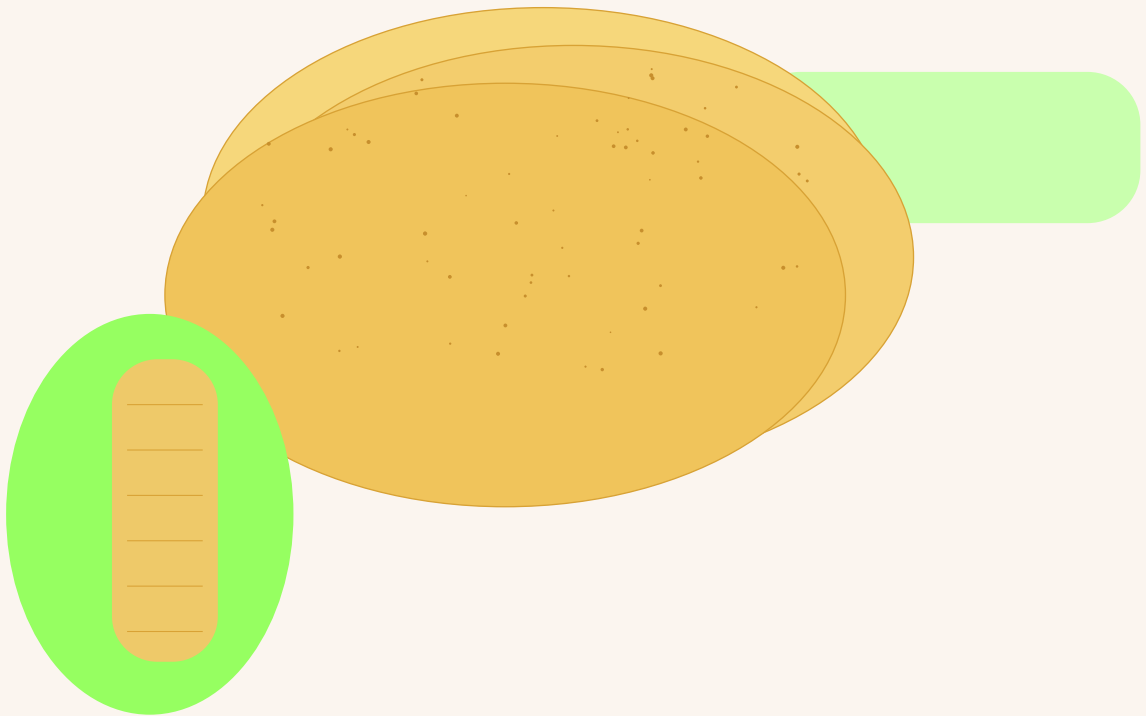


DITO'S TABLE MINI GUIDE

Proper Tortillas

Masa, nixtamal, corn tortillas, wheat tortillas,
and the small details that make tacos taste real.



Taco Craft. Salsa Magic. Proper Tortillas.

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Proper Tortillas: The Summary

A proper tortilla is not just a wrap. It is the foundation of a taco, quesadilla, burrito, tostada, or a Mexi-terranean experiment. It should be warm, flexible, aromatic, and strong enough to carry the filling without becoming sad and soggy.

THE DITO'S TABLE TORTILLA RULE

Corn tortillas need masa - nixtamalised corn dough - not regular cornmeal. Wheat tortillas need thin rolling, enough fat, and confident heat. In both cases, the little puff is the sign that you are close to tortilla happiness.

Tortilla	Made from	Best for	Key move
Corn tortilla	Masa or masa harina	Tacos, small quesadillas, saucy fillings	Press, cook hot, flip early
Wheat tortilla	Flour, water, fat, salt	Burritos, northern-style tacos, softer wraps	Roll thin, cook medium-hot
Half-and-half	Wheat flour plus fine cornmeal	Flexible fusion tortillas	Roll rather than press

Use this guide as a practical kitchen map: first understand masa, then choose your method, then press or roll, cook, puff, store, and serve.

What Makes a Tortilla Proper?

For most Mexican tacos, the classic tortilla is made from masa: a dough of nixtamalised corn. This is the difference between a tortilla that folds and a cornmeal pancake that cracks. Nixtamalisation changes corn's flavour, texture, and cooking behaviour, making the dough pliable enough for proper tortillas.

In simple terms, dried field corn is cooked and steeped in an alkaline limewater solution, then rinsed and ground into a wet dough. That wet dough is fresh masa. When masa is dried and milled into flour, it becomes masa harina - the practical home-cook shortcut.

Term	What it means	Kitchen note
Masa	Fresh nixtamalised corn dough.	Best flavour, but spoils quickly and needs grinding equipment.
Masa harina	Dried and milled masa flour.	The easiest reliable method for home tortillas.
Nixtamal	Corn after cooking and soaking with food-grade cal.	Needs to be ground before it becomes masa.
Cal	Food-grade calcium hydroxide used for nixtamalisation.	Use food-grade only, and follow the supplier's cooking guidance.

DO NOT CONFUSE THESE

Regular cornmeal, polenta, or grits are not the same as masa harina. They can be delicious in their own world, but they will not behave like proper masa for folding tacos.

Three Ways to Make Masa

There is no single correct route for every kitchen. The best method depends on what you can buy locally, how much time you have, and whether you are cooking at home or building a serious tortilla habit.

Method	How it works	Best when	Watch out
1. Rehydrate masa harina	Mix masa harina with warm water and a pinch of salt. Knead, rest, adjust water, then press.	You want the easiest and most repeatable result.	Different brands absorb water differently.
2. Fresh masa from nixtamal	Cook dried field corn with food-grade cal, steep, rinse, and grind into wet dough.	You want maximum flavour and have a grinder or molino.	Grinding can be hard work; fresh masa spoils fast.
3. DIY masa harina	Make nixtamal, blend it into a paste, dehydrate until dry, then grind into flour.	Masa harina is unavailable where you live.	Oven drying can taste cooked; dehydrator gives more control.

The practical recommendation: start with good masa harina. Once you understand the dough, the press, the heat, and the flip timing, then experiment with fresh masa or your own dehydrated flour.

Reliable starting ratio: 300 g masa harina + 325 ml lukewarm water + a pinch of salt. For smaller testing, try 115 g masa harina + 160 ml lukewarm water. Always hold back some water at first and adjust by feel.

FOR TACOS

Real Corn Tortillas

Corn tortillas are the signature vessel for tacos. The target texture is soft but sturdy: pliable enough to fold, strong enough to hold juicy fillings, and fragrant enough to taste like corn rather than cardboard.

For about 12 taco-size tortillas	Method
300 g masa harina 325 ml lukewarm water 1 pinch salt	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mix and knead until the dough feels like soft Play-Doh: pliable, hydrated, and not sticky.2. Rest briefly so the flour hydrates.3. Form balls about a golf-ball size.4. Press between two pieces of sturdy plastic.5. Cook on a very hot comal or cast-iron skillet.6. Flip early, flip again, and look for the puff.7. Keep warm in a pouch or wrapped towel.

The puff is not a decorative trick. It tells you that steam is lifting the two thin layers of the tortilla apart. Good hydration, even pressing, a hot surface, and confident timing all help it happen.

CORN TORTILLA TIMING

Cook briefly, flip, cook again, then flip for the final puff. If you overcook one side, the tortilla dries out before the steam can do its work.

Wheat Tortillas and Half-and-Half Tortillas

Wheat tortillas are not less serious - they are simply a different tradition. They shine in northern Mexican cooking, burritos, larger wraps, and softer tacos. They are richer because the dough contains fat, so they cook differently from masa tortillas.

Wheat tortilla base	How to make it
1.5 cups flour 1/2 cup warm water 3 tbsp fat - butter, refined coconut oil, or similar 1/2 tsp salt	Blend flour with fat and salt, add warm water, knead briefly until elastic and not sticky, divide into balls, rest or chill for 10-20 minutes, then roll very thin. Cook on a medium-hot dry comal: about 20 seconds, flip, another 20 seconds, flip again for the puff.

Half-and-half tortillas are a useful bridge. Replace about half of the wheat flour with very fine cornmeal, then adjust with extra flour if the dough feels too wet. Because the wheat still provides elasticity, these are rolled rather than pressed.

PRESS CORN, ROLL WHEAT

A tortilla press is brilliant for masa dough. Wheat dough fights back because gluten makes it elastic, so a rolling pin gives you better control and thinner tortillas.

Troubleshooting the Tortilla Puff

Problem	Likely cause	Fix
Corn dough cracks at the edge	Too dry	Add water in tiny increments and knead again.
Corn dough sticks to plastic	Too wet	Dust in a little more masa harina and rest briefly.
No puff	Uneven thickness, pan not hot enough, or timing is off	Press evenly, heat the comal properly, and flip earlier.
Dry and brittle tortilla	Overcooked or dough underhydrated	Shorten cooking time and soften the dough with water.
Wheat tortilla stays flat	Too thick or cooked too long on the first side	Roll thinner, stretch gently by hand, and flip sooner.
Blue or red corn feels fragile	Some varieties are drier and sturdier	Use slightly more water and adjust heat/timing.

A practical beginner mindset: your first batch is calibration. You are learning your masa harina, your water, your press, your comal, and your heat. Once these variables click, the process becomes much easier.

Choosing, Storing, and Serving

Match the tortilla to the dish. Corn tortillas are especially useful for saucy taco fillings because they keep their shape better. Wheat tortillas absorb sauces more quickly and can become soft, which is lovely for some burritos but not ideal for every juicy taco.

Use corn tortillas for	Use wheat tortillas for
Street-style tacos Small quesadillas Gluten-free Mexican or Mexi-terranean meals Juicy fillings like tinga, barbacoa, mushrooms, beans, or fish	Burritos and burros Larger wraps Northern-style tacos Less saucy fillings Soft, richer, flaky tortilla moments

Storage: keep freshly cooked tortillas warm in a pouch, tortilla warmer, or wrapped tea towel. Once cooled, store them in a sealed bag in the fridge. Reheat before serving. When they become a little stale, do not throw them away - they are ready to become tostadas.

THE PROPER TORTILLA FINISH

Warm the tortilla, add a balanced filling, finish with salsa, acidity, texture, and something creamy if needed. The tortilla is the stage; the taco is the performance.

Proper Tortillas Checklist

- Use masa harina or fresh masa for real corn tortillas - not ordinary cornmeal.
- Start with less water, knead, rest, and adjust by feel.
- Aim for soft Play-Doh consistency: pliable, moist, and not sticky.
- Use sturdy plastic liners for pressing masa dough.
- Preheat the comal properly for corn tortillas; keep wheat tortillas at medium heat.
- Flip early. Overcooking kills the puff and dries the tortilla.
- Keep cooked tortillas warm and covered as you work through the batch.
- Match corn to juicy taco fillings and wheat to burritos or softer wraps.
- Treat leftovers as future tostadas, chilaquiles, or tortilla chips.

NOW COOK

Once you learn tortillas, tacos become a real system: masa, heat, filling, salsa, texture, acid, and joy. That is Dito's Table territory.

Further reading

How To Make Tortillas: Real Corn & Wheat Ones At Home - Dito's Table

Masa: From Mexican Traditions to Modern Nutrition Powerhouse - Dito's Table

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