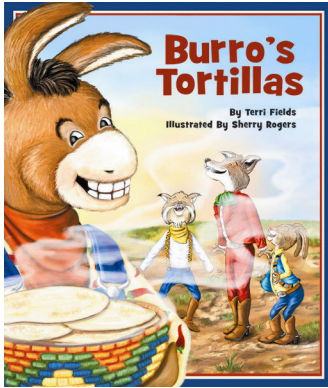




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Science and Math through Literature



Making *Tortillas*

The word *tortilla* comes from the Spanish word “*torta*,” which means “round cake.” When the Spaniards came to Mexico in the sixteenth century, they found the Aztecs making and eating a most unusual food—corn. Sometimes the corn was made into the round cakes the Spaniards named *tortillas*. Today, some people still make *tortillas* from scratch, much the way the Mexican Indians once did and a lot like the way the little burro makes his *tortillas* in this book. You can make *tortillas* too. You can buy the special corn flour, called *maseca*, at a grocery or

Mexican store. *Maseca* is made just as Burro did in the story, by cooking corn with a little lime (not the lime fruit, but a special lime that comes from burning limestone). It is then rinsed, dried and ground into the flour for us to use.

What you will need to make 8 *tortillas*:

1 cup <i>maseca</i>	Wax paper
1 Tbs. corn or vegetable oil (optional)	Rolling pin
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm water	Cast iron skillet or griddle
Mixing bowl and spoon or mixer	Spatula
Slightly damp paper towels	

In a large bowl, mix together the *maseca*, the oil if using (this is not traditional but may help to hold the tortillas together while rolling) and the water. Mix together until the dough is smooth and forms a dough ball—about two or three minutes. The dough should be smooth but not too sticky.

Divide the dough into 8 little balls and cover with the slightly damp paper towels to keep them from drying out. Cut off two square pieces of wax paper. Place one ball of dough at a time between the two sheets and use the rolling pin to roll into a circle (as best as you can). With an adult’s help, cook on a very hot, ungreased cast iron skillet or griddle. Use your spatula to flip the tortilla every 15 to 20 seconds until cooked (light brown). Wrap cooked tortillas in a small kitchen towel or cloth to keep warm and to prevent them from drying out.

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