
CAN YOU CALL YOUR TORTILLAS HEALTHY?

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MEXICAN FOOD IS
THE SECOND MOST
POPULAR CUISINE IN
THE US WITH 1.2
MILLION ANNUAL
GOOGLE SEARCHES

<https://www.qualityassurancemag.com/news/new-study-reveals-most-popular-cuisines-in-america/>

WHY AM I THE ONE CHATTING WITH YOU?

- 20 years of experience writing for both consumer and trade publications
- 3 years of covering the “healthy” label
- Nutrition educator with a Master’s of Public Health in Nutrition
- Master’s in Marketing
- Conducted IRB behavioral study on precision nutrition



HISTORY OF THE WORD HEALTHY

- The rule adopted in the 1990s attached the word to specific nutrients contributing to 10% of the daily value.
- Vitamin D, Vitamin A, calcium, iron, protein, or fiber, as long as it didn't go over limits for saturated fat, total fat, sodium, or cholesterol.
- The nutrients could have been added vs. now most have to come from real food.
- Added sugar didn't matter or contribution to food group.

WHO'S WHO OF HEALTHY EATING

- Whole
- Healthy
- Ounce Equivalent

FOOD GROUP
EQUIVALENTS
INSTEAD OF
ADDED
NUTRIENTS

The background of the image is a close-up, slightly blurred photograph of tall grasses. The grasses have long, thin green blades and large, feathery white seed heads that catch the light, giving them a soft, ethereal appearance. The lighting is natural, likely from the sun, creating a warm and organic feel.



THE WORDS THAT ARE INCLUDED:

HEALTHY
HEALTH
HEALTHFUL
HEALTHFULLY
HEALTHFULNESS
HEALTHIER,
HEALTHIEST, HEALTHILY, AND
HEALTHINESS

WHY DID IT CHANGE?

- Companies such as Kind complaining they couldn't use the word healthy on relatively healthy products.
- A general societal and FDA shift away from added vitamins and nutrients
- FDA preference and general health guidance for whole foods
- Added sugar increasingly a concern in health communities
- Easy arguments against the rule when water, oranges, and broccoli weren't able to be labeled as healthy. Now, most whole foods automatically qualify.





EARNING THE HEALTHY LABEL FOR WHOLE GRAINS





WHAT DEFINES A WHOLE GRAIN?

- Can be ground, intact, or flaked
 - Still has the starchy endosperm, germ and bran in the same relative proportions as they exist in the intact caryopsis
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TYPES OF GRAINS

- Grains have to have the word “whole” to qualify.
- Corn, Quinoa, Whole wheat, Oats, Rye
- Can include other refined grains if a whole grain contributes the necessary amount



AMOUNT OF WHOLE GRAIN NEEDED:

12 grams of whole grain per RACC
(Reference Amount Customarily
Consumed)



WHOLE GRAINS
CAN HAVE
REFINED GRAIN /
NIXTAMALIZED
FRIENDS

GLUTEN FREE OPTION

1: CORN TORTILLAS

- Can be white or yellow whole corn
- Must have the word whole and have all the components of whole kernels
- Nixtamalized flour has its own benefits, but can't earn the title unless paired with whole corn, whole wheat flour, or another target ingredient.





GLUTEN FREE WAYS TO EARN THE HEALTHY LABEL: HIGH PROTEIN FOODS

- Only whole, minimally processed ingredients
 - Protein isolates don't count towards earning the label based on protein
 - Legumes, nuts, and eggs do
 - Nuts, seeds, soy, and legumes require 1 ounce equivalent of beans, peas, or lentils
 - Eggs
-

DO PROTEIN
FLOURS NEED TO
USE THE WORD
WHOLE?



NOPE

PROTEIN OPTIONS

- 1 ounce equivalent of beans, lentils, or peas (1/4 cup)
 - 1 ounce equivalent of nuts, soy products, or seeds (1/2 ounce)
 - 1 ounce equivalent of egg (1 large egg, egg white amounts may differ)
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**SATURATED
FAT AND
SUGAR
LIMITS**



SATURATED FATS

- Mainly a factor in fried tortillas or mixed meals / mixed foods
 - Try to substitute high saturated cooking fats with avocado oil, which is safe to cook with at high temperatures
 - Nuts, soy, and seeds are excluded from the requirement
 - Less than or equal to 10 percent of calories in your diet for most other foods (for 2,000 calorie diet, it's less than 2 grams)
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FRIED TORTILLA PRODUCTS

- Chips
- Tostadas
- Taco Shells
- Buñuelos



ADDED SUGAR LIMITS

- Less than 5 percent per RACC of grains
- Not allowed in protein foods that aren't part of a mixed meal
- Up to 20 percent of mixed meals

SODIUM LIMITS

Less than or equal to 10
percent of 2,300 mg / day for
every 50g of product

**WHAT HAPPENS IF
YOUR PRODUCT
QUALIFIES IN
MULTIPLE
CATEGORIES?**



MIXED FOODS

- Must have a total of 1 Food Group Equivalent
- Must be from 2 different food group
- Each of the two must contribute at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of a Food Group Equivalent



RESOURCES:

- FDA final rule:
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/12/27/2024-29957/food-labeling-nutrient-content-claims-definition-of-term-healthy>
 - FDA Guidelines search: <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents>
 - Scientific American Healthy Label Article:
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-fda-is-changing-what-foods-can-be-called-healthy/>
 - For for contacting FDA: <https://www.fda.gov/food/resources-you-food/get-assistance-fda-human-foods-program-hfp>
 - My course website: www.bestnutritionclassever.com
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**HOW TO
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