



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

3101 Park  
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Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

**DATE:** 10/03/2012

**MEMO CODE:** SP 02 -2013

**SUBJECT:** Corn Masa (Dough) for Use in Tortilla Chips, Taco Shells, and Tamales

**TO:** Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

This memorandum is intended to provide clarification for use of corn products traditionally manufactured with corn masa dough where the corn is treated with lime (calcium hydroxide), such as tortilla chips, taco shells, and tamales.

**Whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement timeline:** for lunch, beginning July 1, 2012 (SY 2012-2013), half of the grains offered during the school week must meet the WGR criteria. For breakfast, beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013-2014), half of the grains offered during the school week must meet the WGR criteria. Beginning July 1, 2014, (SY 2014-2015), all grains must meet the WGR criteria for lunch and breakfast.

Grain products that meet the WGR criteria contain 100-percent whole grain or contain a blend of whole-grain meal and/or flour and enriched meal and/or flour of which at least 50-percent is whole grain. Whole grain-rich products must contain at least 50-percent whole grains and the remaining grain, if any, must be enriched.

In making traditional corn masa dough, the corn may be manufactured using wet milling procedures (*corn treated with lime*), where fractions of the kernel are washed away. In some instances, the processed corn has a nutrient profile similar to whole grain corn. When this corn ingredient is used in making corn masa dough for products such as tortilla chips, taco shells, and tamales, it may be acceptable as a whole-grain ingredient. These corn products, using *corn treated with lime*, may be used in meeting the WGR criteria provided that the manufacturer meets the requirements for inclusion of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) whole grain health claim and includes the claim on the product carton.

The health claim states, "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers." Enrichment of corn masa (*corn treated with lime*) is not required for School Meal Programs when the finished corn product bears the FDA whole grain health claim. If

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the corn product includes other grain ingredients, such as flour, these ingredients must be whole or enriched to meet the WGR requirements. Refer to guidance memo SP 30-2012 for complete WGR criteria.

Grain products that are made from 100-percent whole grain corn continue to meet the WGR criteria and can be served in the School Meal Programs.

We appreciate all you do for the School Meal Programs and look forward to continue working with you to improve the nutrition of America's children. State agencies are reminded to distribute this memo to program operators immediately. School Food Authorities should contact their State agencies for additional information. State agencies may direct any questions concerning this guidance to the appropriate Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office.

Sincerely,

**Original Signed**

Cynthia Long  
Director  
Child Nutrition Division