

Food in El Salvador

What did you have for breakfast this morning?

If you lived in El Salvador, your mom might feed you a leftover tortilla for breakfast. You would eat it with salt. If you are a little kid, your mom might break the tortilla up into pieces and put a little milk over it. You would probably drink water. Sometimes you might have hot chocolate or a warm drink made from corn. If you are lucky, you might have some refried beans, a fried egg, or some dry salty cheese. The Spanish word for breakfast is *desayuno*.

Lunch or *almuerzo* is the biggest meal of the day. You probably eat beans almost every day, and fresh, hot tortillas. Salvadoran tortillas are made from corn flour. They are thick and as big around as a coffee-saucer. Salvadorans like to eat soup for lunch. You might find a chunky cob of corn in your soup. You just dig it out with your fingers and eat it.

Supper or *cena* is made with re-heated tortillas, and beans or eggs or leftovers from lunch.

If you are a Salvadoran mom, you spend a lot of time cooking. First, you need to gather wood for a fire or you might have a stove that uses propane gas. If you grow your own corn, then you let it dry and the children help to rub it off of the cobs. Many moms buy a big bag of corn from the market, and carry it on their heads back to their homes. Children help out by carrying the dried corn to the grinding machine, where they pay 25 cents to grind a big bucket of corn kernels into flour. The flour is mixed with a little water, and patted into tortillas. The tortillas are cooked on a hot, dry, metal surface. When they are done, they are wrapped in towels to keep them warm.

In El Salvador, most families eat red beans. First, the beans need to be sorted so that no stones or dirt are mixed in. This is a job for the little children. Then the dry beans need to be soaked in water over night to make them soft. The beans cook in a big pot for a long, long time, and are seasoned with spices that grow in little gardens. The delicious smell fills the house all day long.

On very special days, families in El Salvador eat fancy meals that include chicken. Most Salvadoran families that live in the countryside raise chickens, so that they can sell or eat the eggs. Scrambled eggs with peppers and onions in them are often served for lunch or supper. Families often have fruit trees that grow near their homes, and they can buy fruit at the market. Favorite fruits are mangos, watermelons, pineapples, bananas, plantains, papayas and coconuts.

A very favorite and common food that families in El Salvador eat is the **pupusa** (poo-poo-suh). A pupusa is a thick tortilla that has beans or cheese or meat or squash inside of it. It is eaten with Cole slaw made with cabbage, vinegar and carrots, and a thin, smooth tomato salsa.

For Older Kids: Something to think About...

Maybe you have heard of free trade agreements? One of the results of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is that US corn could be sold in El Salvador. The US corn was sold more cheaply than Salvadoran corn. This forced small Salvadoran corn farmers to give up farming. This made Salvadorans more dependent on US corn. Recently, the price of corn in the US and in El Salvador has greatly increased in price. This is partly due to the increased demand for ethanol. What does this mean for poor people in El Salvador, who depend on corn tortillas as their staple food? As the price of corn has gone up, small corn farmers in El Salvador can get a better price for their corn so they can afford to farm (if they still have their land).



Coconuts ... fresh from the tree



Chicken



Kevin and Kenia carry corn to the grinder... where it is ground into flour to make tortillas





Cooking pupusas



A typical big breakfast...rice and beans, fried egg with salsa, salty cheese



Water – this community has water stations on each little street. The water is pumped from the well to these stations. Families use hoses to fill big barrels near their houses.

Vanessa thanks God for a very special supper...eggs with a cut-up hot dog

