

United States THE FERNANDEZES OF TEXAS



The Fernandez family in the kitchen of their San Antonio, Texas, home with a week's worth of food—Lawrence, 31, and wife, Diana, 35, standing, and Diana's mother, Alejandrina Cepeda, 58, sitting with her grandchildren Brian, 5, and Brianna, 4. Cooking methods: electric stove, microwave, toaster oven, outdoor BBQ. Food preservation: refrigerator-freezer. Favorite foods—Diana: shrimp with Alfredo sauce; Lawrence: barbecue ribs; Brian and Brianna: pizza; Alejandrina: chicken mole.

Grains and Other Starchy Foods: \$19.28

potatoes, 5 lb
 homemade tortillas, 1.6 lb
 Kellogg's Special K cereal with red berries, 1.5 lb
 Nature's Own honey wheat bread, 1 loaf
 Quaker masa harina, 1.3 lb
 Gold Medal all-purpose flour, 1 lb
 H-E-B (store brand) French-style bread, 1 lb
 white rice, 1 lb
 Cream of Wheat cereal, 14 oz
 Quaker oatmeal, 13.5 oz
 dinner rolls, 13 oz
 Post Cocoa Pebbles cereal, 13 oz
 H-E-B fettuccine, 5.3 oz
 Q&Q vermicelli, 5 oz

Dairy: \$17.72
 Borden Kid Builder milk, 1% low fat, high calcium, 1 gal
 Oak Farms Skim Deluxe milk, 1 gal
 Blue Bell ice cream, 1 qt
 Danon Danimals, Swingin' Strawberry Banana and Rockin' Raspberry drinkable yogurt, 25.2 fl oz
 Yoplait piña colada yogurt, 1.5 lb
 Yoplait blueberry yogurt, 12 oz
 Kraft Colby and Monterey Jack cheese, 8 oz
 Frigo Cheese Heads string cheese, 6 oz

Meat, Fish, and Eggs: \$42.10

Hill Country Fare chicken drumsticks, 3 lb
 Hill Country Fare jumbo eggs, 18
 H-E-B rotisserie chicken, original flavor, 2.5 lb
 Sanderson Farms chicken thigh fillets, boneless and skinless, 1.5 lb
 Gorton's Original Tenders fish sticks, frozen, 1.1 lb
 H-E-B extra-lean beef, ground, 1 lb
 H-E-B turkey breast, ground, 1 lb
 Oscar Mayer turkey cotto salami, 1 lb
 shrimp, frozen, 1 lb
 Butterball turkey variety pack, sliced, 12 oz
 H-E-B beef, top round cubes, 12 oz
 Tyson fun nuggets, frozen chicken, 12 oz
 Hill Country Fare smoked chicken, sliced, 5 oz

Fruits, Vegetables, and Nuts: \$33.05

grapefruit, 5 lb
 Dole bananas, 2.5 lb
 Granny Smith apples, 1.3 lb
 green grapes, 1.3 lb

Coastal strawberries, 1 lb
 Key limes, 1 lb
 red apples, 12.8 oz
 Hass avocados, 4
 Hunts tomato sauce, 2.5 lb
 Green Giant green beans, canned, 2 lb
 Green Giant corn, frozen, 1.6 lb
 tomatoes, 1.3 lb
 La Sierra refried pinto beans, 15 oz
 iceberg lettuce, 1 head
 Fresh Express Italian salad mix, 8.8 oz
 yellow onions, 8.6 oz
 Fresh Express coleslaw, 8 oz
 mini carrots, 8 oz
 mushrooms, sliced, 8 oz
 jalapeño peppers, 4 oz
 garlic, 2 oz
 Planters honey-roasted peanuts, 12 oz

Condiments: \$16.05

Great Value vegetable oil, 2.1 qt
 Hill Country Fare BBQ sauce, 1.1 lb
 International Delight coffee creamer, 16 fl oz
 I Can't Believe It's Not Butter spread, 15.8 oz
 Aunt Lemima Butter Lite syrup, 12 oz
 Hill Country Fare ketchup, 9 oz
 Clover Burlinson's honey, 8 oz
 H-E-B roasted pepper salsa picante, 8 oz
 Season All seasoned salt, 8 oz
 Wish-Bone Classic Ranch-Upi dressing, 6 oz
 peanut butter, 4 oz
 pepper, ground, 1 oz
 salt, 0.5 oz

Snacks and Desserts: \$23.33

H-E-B Texas-shaped corn chips, 1 lb
 pretzels, 1 lb
 Dreyers whole-fruit bar popsicles, 16.5 fl oz
 Oreo cookies, 9 oz
 Ritz whole wheat crackers, 7.5 oz
 Pepperidge Farm Goldfish Colors crackers, 6.6 oz
 Ritz Sticks crackers, 6.3 oz
 Pringles potato chips, 6 oz
 General Mills Fruit Gushers snacks, 5.4 oz
 Kellogg's Special K blueberry bars, 4.9 oz
 Kellogg's Special K peaches and berry bars, 4.9 oz
 Orville Redenbacher's Smart Pop microwave popcorn, 3.7 oz
 Barnum's animal crackers, 2.1 oz

Prepared Food: \$18.16

Prego spaghetti sauce, 1 lb
 La Sierra refried beans with cheese, 15 oz
 Ranch Style beans with jalapeño peppers, 15 oz
 Pioneer Brand buttermilk pancake mix, 10.7 oz
 Bertolli creamy Alfredo sauce, 8 oz
 Zatarain's black beans and rice, 7 oz
 Zatarain's gumbo mix, 7 oz
 Pioneer brown gravy mix, nonfat, 2.8 oz
 Pioneer Country gravy mix, nonfat, 2.8 oz
 Knorr Suiza chicken broth, 2 oz
 Diana at work, 5 cafeteria meals, variety of main courses available; Lawrence at work, a salad or slice of pizza

Fast Food: \$11.81

McDonald's: 3 Happy Meals
 4 Mountain Blast ice cream drinks
 1 vanilla ice cream cone

Restaurants: \$42.11

Fire Mountain Buffet: dinner for 5, assorted items, sold by the pound, 3.8 lb
 Cici's Pizza: large beef pizza, large white pizza, large meat lover's pizza, 3 salads

Beverages: \$18.87

Hill Country Fare natural spring water, 8 gal
 Tree Top apple juice, 1 gal
 Capri Sun Mountain Cooler, 10 6.8-fl-oz packages
 Capri Sun orange drink, 10 6.8-fl-oz packages
 Dole pineapple-orange-banana juice, 8 6-fl-oz cartons
 Hill Country Fare iced tea mix, 1.7 lb
 Wylers' Light pink lemonade, powdered mix, 1.2 lb
 H-E-B Café Ole coffee, 3 oz
 Ovaltine malted instant drink mix, 3 oz
 Kool-Aid, sugar-free grape powdered mix, 1.2 oz

The Fernandezes begin their Sunday grocery trip after lunch. Clutching their spending money, Brianna and Brian head for the bakery case, where they settle on giant *pan dulces*.

languages seamlessly, helping her children understand words they don't know. The conversation is wide-ranging. "What is *limón*?" Brianna asks at one point, as her grandmother hands her a ball of dough. "Lemon," says Diana, as she watches Brian pummel the dough in his press. "Is this pancake okay?" Brianna asks. "Bueno," says Alejandrina, who's expertly pressing most of the tortillas in her own large press. "But it's not a pancake—it's a tortilla," she says in Spanish. Diana translates. Alejandrina will forgo cooking the tortillas on a *comal*, a traditional griddle. She'll cook them on the stove and turn them into the kids' favorite—cheese quesadillas.

The Fernandezes eat from the global dinner table most of the time. "We go from mullet to *menudo* to egg rolls," says Diana's husband Lawrence, an accomplished cook who grew up in Louisiana. He credits his upbringing there with sparking his love of food: "When someone invites you to dinner in Louisiana, you never say no. It's going to be a big deal—a big pot of something," says Lawrence. "Especially if they've got a [Creole name like] Breaux or Mouton." Lawrence, who manages a Cici's Pizzeria, also cooks with the children. On those occasions he, too, helps them prepare balls of dough, though ones that are much bigger than his mother-in-law's. "I'll bring raw dough and sauce home," he says, "and the kids and I will build pizzas. And that's a big treat." Any dessert? "Ice cream at midnight, when the kids are asleep."

Alejandrina Cepeda works as a nanny on the weekdays, but for an hour on Saturday afternoons she transforms the home she shares with her daughter's family into a Mexican *tortillería*. Her grandchildren stand on chairs with their own kid-size tortilla presses and watch her mix masa harina (corn-flour mix) and water with her hands. Brianna, four, leans over the bowl inquisitively, speaking with her grandmother in English. Alejandrina, who speaks English, answers in her native Spanish. Brian, five, loudly flings his press open and closed several times. "Remember, Brian," warns his mother, Diana Fernandez, a school librarian, "your grandmother likes you to be serious when you're cooking with her." Brian is more interested in eating the tortillas than making them, but with the just-add-water tortilla mix from the supermarket, the process is quick. Diana—who was raised by Alejandrina in the Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo, on the U.S.-Mexico border—flows between the two



Diana Fernandez's Quesadillas from Fresh Corn Tortillas

- 1½ cups warm water
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups masa harina (dried, lime-treated fine cornmeal)
- 4 cups coarsely grated Colby Jack cheese (can substitute any kind of Cheddar cheese)

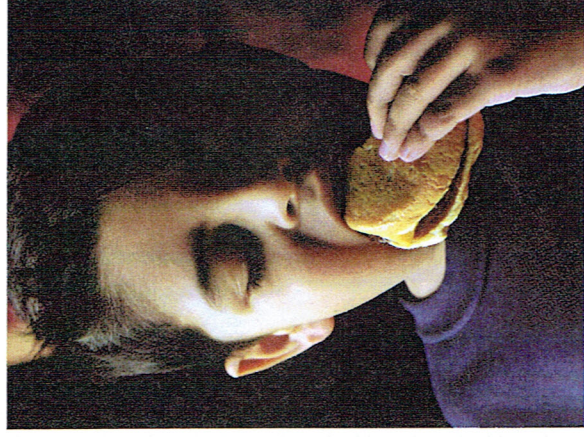
Knead the warm water and salt into the masa harina until the dough is warm and only slightly sticky. Cut the dough into about 18 little balls, each of which will form one tortilla.

Flatten the little dough balls with a *tortillera* (tortilla press) until they are very thin. (They can be rolled with a rolling pin, but this is much more difficult.)

Place a flattened dough circle on a seasoned *comal* (a flat cooking pan made specially to cook tortillas) on medium-high heat.

Once the tortilla yellows and becomes harder, put a handful of cheese in the middle and fold the tortilla in half. Keep the folded tortilla on the *comal* just long enough to melt the cheese, turning it over when necessary (about 5 minutes total).

Serve immediately.



After the Saturday soccer game, Diana and Alejandrina perform a family ritual (left): making fresh tortillas (in background) for cheese quesadillas (see recipe above). The next day, though, it's back to less-than-traditional fare: takeout chicken and soda pop (top).

At home, Brian polishes off a cheeseburger from Whataburger (above).