

Locals Recommend the Best tamales in the County 2024

In California tamales and Christmas go together.

Some of the most delicious tamales are sold by "grocery store parking lot tamale entrepreneurs" who may not have a regular schedule and leave as soon as they are sold out. If you encounter one, please introduce yourself and let us their **first name, location, days and approximate start hour**. Then buy one, take a few bites and email us your "review." Thank you!
info@santacruzparent.com.

“There are several types of tamales, but they all rely on the same base: fluffy, steamed dough pockets wrapped in either corn husks or edible leaves, filled with anything from meat to veggies, and often eaten with salsa, guacamole and sour cream. They’re usually a special-occasion food because they take a bit of time to prepare — all the stuffing and folding has to be done by hand.”

Traditionally several women get together for a whole day of making tamales and gossip, but more and more men are bringing their creativity to the production. It’s a social occasion and an art! Even making a small batch by yourself takes 3-4 hours.

That’s why most of us purchase from tamale pros and are willing to pay \$36+ for a dozen! Locals know where they are and like the ones that are rich with filling inside the masa. We found prices around \$3/tamale or \$36 and up for a dozen.

Favorite Tamale Sources

Avoid disappointment: Call or order online!

Cardenas Market - Fresh and authentic Hispanic food, especially the tamales, 1437 Freedom Blvd., Watsonville, [\(831\) 763-7656](tel:8317637656) , ,
<https://www.cardenasmarkets.com/>

Casa Rossy - "Casa Rossy offers Tamales, Chilaquiles, Burritos, Tacos... Call ahead about tamales. 257 Center Ave. Aptos, ecarlosa@yahoo.com, (831) 661-5736, <https://www.casarossyca.com/>

D’La Colmena Market & Catering – Amazing everything. Epic tamales. \$36/dozen dozen. .They do all the carnitas and carne asada, etc. for most of the taco trucks in the area. So when you think, “that was a great taco truck,” it’s usually D’ La Colmena. Also the potato Chorizo breakfast burrito’s awesome. Have you had an asada torta, so good. (831) 724-4544, 129 W Lake Ave, Watsonille,
<https://dlacolmenacatering.com/>

El Herradero, They only have them on weekends and they sell out. These are the best. I usually call early and have them save me some. **(831) 722-2281**, 110 Pennsylvania Dr (off Main), Watsonville

El Palomar Restaurant - We make fresh tamales for you to enjoy on Christmas Eve! Pre-order in advance because quantities are limited. Pick up between 11:30AM – 6:00PM on December 24th! We offer Chicken Tinga tamales for \$25/half dozen and \$45/dozen, both served with a side of roasted tomato salsa. Call to order! 831-425-7575 , Pacific Ave, Santa Cruz, <https://elpalomarsantacruz.com/>

El Rosal Bakery - The green chiles tamales are the best! You can't go wrong there. They sell out all the time. Take them over to the cove to eat. "Hot and fresh out of the pot, come by to pick out your favorites or relax and take home a dozen. Find us on Uber Eats so we can come to you. We offer mixed tamales (green chicken, red chicken, sweet corn, and cheese or jalapeno): \$39.99/dozen or Pork tamales: \$44.99/dozen." (831) 462-1308, 21513 E Cliff Dr., Santa Cruz, <https://www.elrosalbakery.com/>

Manuel's - Manuel's tamales are the bomb. Call first. 831-688-4848, 261 Center Ave, Aptos. <https://www.manuelsrestaurant.com/>

Mijo's Taqueria - "We make tamales for the Christmas holiday. Pre-order for pickup the 22nd and 23rd of December. Online pre-orders will accepted starting December 1st or you can swing by the taqueria to place an order. You can also reach me at <mailto:anthony@mijostaqueria.com>. We only sell the Tamales for the Christmas Holidays every year. It's a tradition for everyone in our restaurant to help prep and fold the tamales. We usually prepare about 100 dozen orders over 3 days to get them ready for pickup. Customer Favorites are Red Chile Pork and Salsa Verde chicken." Anthony Guajardo. 408.824.4928, 200 Monterey Ave #2, Capitola. <https://www.mijostaqueria.com/>

Soquel Quality Meats - Light and airy masa, chicken, pork and veggie, 4623 Soquel Dr, Soquel, [\(831\) 479-7088](tel:8314797088)

The Tamale Factory – "We prepare the richest tamales daily, Pork, Chicken, Jalapeños with cheese and sweet corn. The holy day comes soon and we give thanks for all the beautiful things that happen to us. We know it has been a very hard year for all including us who work preparing food for each of you. We look forward to a good year. We ask all of you who are waiting for tamales to make your orders for the holidays early. Come visit us! "(831) 724-7214, 611 Main St, Watsonville, or order online: <https://www.facebook.com/thetamalfactory>

The Tamale Ladies - The tamales the ladies sell in the Safeway parking lot are "delish." Wednesday and Friday 7-7:30am. She gets there by 6:30am and leaves when she is empty. They are the BEST! **Safeway Parking Lot**, Mission St, Santa Cruz. At **Safeway Parking Lot**, Soquel Dr, Aptos, "The tamales are awesome."

The Tamale Lady, \$25/dozen. "We found Martha's daughter selling out of a minivan at the Safeway at 3pm on a Friday" (after patrolling Walmart with no luck). **Safeway Parking Lot**, 905 1st St, Gilroy