

# Mexican food guide prefers old ways

Associated Press

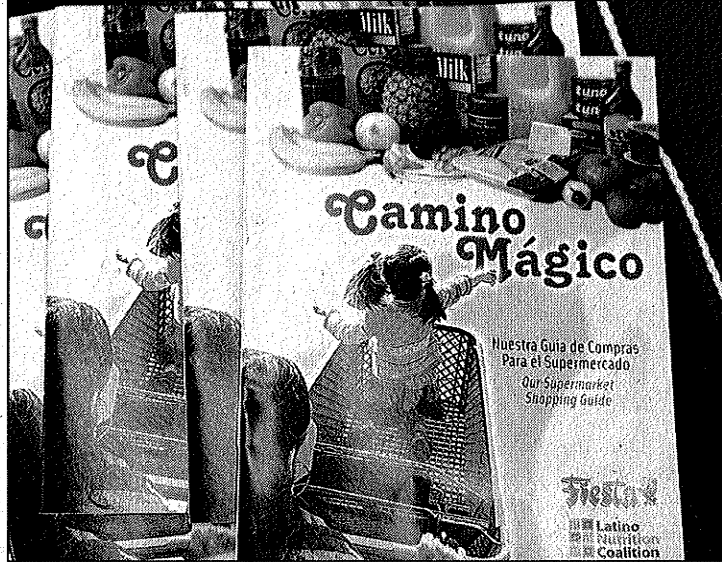
HOUSTON — A new food pyramid, designed to encourage Latinos to eat healthier, touts the staples of traditional Latin-American cooking as the path to better nutrition.

The Latin American Diet Pyramid emphasizes the benefits of grains and tubers such as maize, quinoa and plantains, and tropical fruits such as mangos and papayas. It's featured in a pocket-sized bilingual shopping guide set for distribution nationwide.

The 16-page pamphlet, called "Camino Magico" or Magic Road, is the centerpiece of a campaign launched Tuesday by the Latino Nutrition Coalition, a nonprofit dedicated to improving Latino eating habits.

The basic message is: The old ways are the best ways.

The pamphlet teaches shoppers to choose fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains over processed or prepared foods. It also offers a shopping list and meal ideas incorporating healthier versions of traditional dishes, such as a bean tortilla melt, arroz con



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Bilingual supermarket shopping guides featuring a food pyramid designed to encourage Latinos to make healthier food choices are on display at a Houston grocery store this week.

pollo and Mexican chicken soup.

"We're trying to get people talking about what we should be eating, and to focus on more traditional and healthier foods rather than big quantities of cheap food," said Liz Mintz,

manager of the Latino Nutrition Coalition. "We wanted to create awareness in the community and inspire people to eat healthy."

The supermarket guide, which is now available in some stores and churches in Dallas

and Houston, will eventually be distributed in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Boston, Mintz said.

The coalition, whose parent company Oldways Preservation Trust created the Mediterranean Diet, developed the Latin American Diet Pyramid as a way to combat high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease in the Hispanic community.

Obesity rates among Latinos in the U.S. doubled between 1991 and 2001, from 11.6 percent to 23.7 percent. About 23 percent of Hispanic men are obese, while 27.5 percent of women are obese — higher rates than those of non-Hispanics.

Latinos are also two times more likely to have diabetes, and to suffer from diabetes-related illness such as kidney and eye disease.