

El Día de los Muertos: The Day of the Dead. Adopted from 2 articles.



“5 Día de los Muertos Questions You Were Too Afraid To Ask” by Ana Maria Benedetti, Latino Voices, HuffPost. AND

“Día De Los Muertos: Not ‘Mexican Halloween,’ but So Much More” by Alex Heigl, people.com

1. **What’s the difference between *Día de los Muertos* and Halloween?**

Día de los Muertos — also known as “Día de Muertos,” or “Day of the Dead” in English — is a holiday with Mexican origins that is celebrated on November 1 - 2. While some imagery might be close to that of Halloween, there are significant differences between the two. Día de los Muertos is a day to celebrate death — or, more specifically, the deceased — while on Halloween, death is seen as something to be feared. Día de los Muertos has both indigenous origins from the Aztec festival for Mictecacihuatl, The Lady of The Dead, and Catholic origins from the Spanish conquistadors’ All Saints and All Souls Day.

2. **Wait, it’s a two-day Holiday?**

Yes, the original Aztec holiday was actually a month long event, but when the Spanish conquistadores arrived and turned Mexico Catholic, the celebration became intertwined with All Saints Day (Nov. 1) and All Souls Day (Nov. 2). Traditionally, Nov. 1 is when you welcome the souls of children that have passed away, known as Día de los Inocentes (Day of the Innocents) or Día de los Angelitos (Day of the Little Angels). Nov. 2 is when the adult souls arrive.

“Originally a harvest celebration for the Aztecs, what would become the Day of the Dead in Mexico was originally celebrated around the end of summer (some believe August), structured as it was around the farming season. This is much like Halloween, which is derived from pagan holidays that also celebrated the change of the seasons. Spanish conquistadors bringing Catholic influence to Latin America combined the holiday with the Catholic traditions of All Saints’ and All Souls’ Day.”

El Día de los Muertos follows a similar two-day structure (and occupies the same two days of the calendar year, Nov. 1 and 2nd), but the focus is different. On the first day, families remember children who have died, and on the second, the adults. The central belief is that the spirits of loved ones are allowed to join the living on those days and commune with them, and the celebration is geared towards that idea: People leave toys and *calaveras* (the iconic skull — made from sugar — that inspires the makeup and look of the holiday) for children, and for adults they leave food, favorite possessions and alcohol at elaborate homemade altars (called *ofrendas*).

3. **How do you celebrate the dead?**

Those who celebrate Día de los Muertos will usually put up “ofrendas” (offerings) honoring those members of the family who have passed away. They decorate the ofrendas, which appear to look like altars, with candles, sugar skulls, marigolds, food, beverages and clothes. These are gifts for the dead and are usually a combination of his or her favorite things. Like the holiday itself, the altar also has mixed imagery of both indigenous and Catholic background. The graves of the deceased are also visited and honored with offerings as well as vigils.

4. **Would you have to go to Mexico to see these celebrations?**

No, although Día de los Muertos is a Mexican National Holiday it is actually celebrated in other countries as well such as Guatemala, Brazil and Spain. It is also becoming more and more popular in the U.S. due to the large number of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.

5. What's up with all the skulls?

Skulls are everywhere during Día de los Muertos. The origins trace back to the pre-Hispanic era, when they were kept as trophies and used during rituals.

The most recognized skull on Dia de los Muertos is the Calavera Catrina. The image as we know it today originated with José Guadalupe Posada, a Mexican Artist who depicted a fancy female skeleton as a dig against the Europhile Mexican elite during the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship. It became an iconic image of the Mexican Revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century.

But the actual Catrina is said to have originated thanks to the Aztec tale of Mictecacihuatl, the Lady of the Dead.

One of the holiday's most iconic symbols is actually a political cartoon: In the early 20th century, famous Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada sketched out a female skeleton dressed in an elaborate hat. Posada's intent was to skewer Mexican natives he felt were rushing to adopt European modes and customs at the expense of their own culture, but she became a larger symbol of the holiday thanks to Diego Rivera, who christened the character La Calaveras Catrina in his 1948 work *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central (Dream of a Sunday afternoon along Central Alameda)*, pictured above. To this day, she — and her attendant male counterparts — have become an essential representation of the holiday. Catrina also has her ties in the Aztec death goddess Mictecacihuatl, or the Lady of the Dead, who was keeper of the bones in the underworld and officiant of the Aztec harvest celebrations that would evolve into Día De Los Muertos.

It's important to remember that, despite all the morbid imagery, Día De Los Muertos is about celebrating life, not mourning death. **It's a joyous holiday, one that winks at death instead of crying over it.**

Misconceptions, corrected! : (by INSIDE MEXICO, Sept 30, 2017)

1. The Day of the Dead IS NOT the Mexican version of **Halloween**. Mexicans have celebrated the Day of the Dead since the year 1800 B.C.
2. It is **not scary** or morbid. There are no pictures or images of dead people, ghosts, witches, or the devil.
3. The Day of the Dead is **not a cult**. It is a Catholic Christian ritual intermixed with folk culture. Going to mass is an essential aspect of this celebration.
4. Day of the Dead **doesn't honor death, but our dead relatives**. We welcome the opportunity to reflect upon our lives, our heritage, our ancestors and the meaning and purpose of our own existence
5. **Ofrendas, which look like altars**, are not for worship but for **offering love** and remembering our departed family members.
6. Day of the Dead is **not a sad** ritual. It's a day of happiness because we will be remembering our loved ones. Although when in the graveyard, people assume an introspective attitude.
7. The Day of the Dead is **about Love, not Fear**.
8. Day of the Dead is not a "strange" ritual. It is very similar to going to a grave and leaving flowers or stuffed animals, lighting a candle to remember the deceased.
9. It is not a careless or fearless confrontation of death. It's a **moment to reflect upon one's life and the cycle of life and death, and to remember loved ones**.