

Día de los Muertos

Traditional Altar

It is generally constructed in the home, but could also be at the gravesite or even at a business establishment. Many families construct altars as an annual remembrance. Beginning in mid-October, children and adults prepare to welcome the souls of their dead loved ones, who return home at this time each year to make sure all is well and that they have not been forgotten.

Preparation of the altar can be expensive, since anything placed there for the visiting soul, including the dishes for food offerings, must be new. The altar should be placed on a straw mat on the floor or on a table.

Historical Background

The altar consist for four levels and four sides, representing the four stages of life, the four points of the earth, the four seasons, and the four mathematical points upon which the pyramids were built. Bases upon these four points the following items are used.

The four principle seeds used by the Aztecs were:

- o tomatillo (green tomato)
- o cacao
- o chile
- o and corn

The four elements of life:

- o water (the conch shell)
- o fire (candles)
- o earth
- o and wind (flute and conch shell)

The four stages of life are also represented in the four stages of corn:

- o the seed
- o fresh corn
- o dry corn
- o and the corn used in different foods:
 - + tortillas
 - + tamales
 - + atole

Traditional Altar Offerings

Sal (salt)

Flores (flowers)

Pan de Muerto (bread of the dead)

Azúcar (sugar)

Plátanos (bananas)

Papél Picado (cut paper skeletons)

Maíz (corn)

Naranjas (oranges)

¡Uno vaso de aqua un debe!(Glass of water a must!)

Sugar Skulls

Cémpasuchil (marigold flowers)

Frijoles (beans)

Copal (incense)

Juguete Ataúdes (toy coffins)

Cacao (cocoa)

Atole (a corn drink)

Momentos Personal (personal momentos)

Leche (milk)

Velas (candles)

Las Fotos del Difunto (photos of the deceased)

Nueces (nuts)

Nube (baby's breath)

Pollo en Mole (chicken in mole)

Arco de Altar (altar arch)

Juguetes y Presentes (toys and gifts)

Manzanas (apples)

Calaveras (skeletons)

Símbolos Religiosos (religious symbols)