

What Is Day of the Dead, the Mexican Holiday?

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/article/day-of-the-dead-mexico.html>

MEXICO CITY — Day of the Dead, or Día de Muertos, is one of the most important celebrations in Mexico, with roots dating back thousands of years, long before Spanish settlers arrived. It has become a blend of Catholic tradition and Mexican mysticism, commemorating death as another element of life and as a way to remember and honor loved ones.

In bustling markets, stalls sell decorated skulls made of sugar or chocolate and sheets of tissue paper, cut into delicate shapes, adorn stores and restaurants. In houses all over the country, families carefully place photographs of their ancestors on an altar beside candles and a traditional Mexican pastry as incense fills the air. In flower shops, freshly cut marigolds line the storefronts.

Although the tradition has long been part of Mexican culture, the holiday has of late become an important tourist draw, with travelers visiting towns and cities across the country to witness the colorful displays or ofrendas, altars to invite the spirits of the dead back into the world of the living.

While the colorful festivities have appeared in Oscar-winning movies and even commercials for major companies, for Mexicans it remains an intimate family tradition, a moment to remember and honor those we have lost, and allow them back into our homes, even just for an evening. And in a country where violence and tragedy have become pervasive, it is also a reminder of Mexico's ability to persevere and laugh at anything — even death.

When is Day of the Dead?

It is observed on Nov. 2, when all souls of the dead are believed to return to the world of the living. But the celebration typically begins on Oct. 28, with each day dedicated to a different kind of death: people who died in accidents or children who died before being baptized, for example. All Saint's Day, on Nov. 1, honors anyone who led a pure life, particularly children.

Who celebrates Day of the Dead?

It is primarily a Mexican tradition, but other Catholic countries around the world also honor the deceased. In the Philippines, relatives visit the graves of the dead, bringing flowers and lighting candles. In Brazil, there is Dia de Finados. And in many other countries, including the United States, Nov. 2 is similarly recognized as All Souls' Day, when Catholics remember and pray for the dead.

Where did Day of the Dead originate?

The holiday has its origins in Indigenous cultures dating back thousands of years, particularly influenced by the Aztec or Mexica people. In Aztec culture, death was transitory, and the souls of the dead could return to visit the living. At least two important festivals in the fall would celebrate the dead and invite them back to the world of the living. After the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, those traditions were melded into the Catholic calendar, and are now celebrated to coincide with All Souls' Day.

How is Day of the Dead celebrated?

Celebrations vary by region, but some elements tend to be universal. People typically place photos of deceased loved ones at an ofrenda, along with their favorite food or drink. In some parts of the country, like Morelos state, families open their doors to anyone interested in viewing the altar, offering them food like pan de muerto, a traditional Mexican pastry, and atole, a drink made from corn. On Nov. 2, many head to cemeteries to place flowers, candles and other offerings at graves.

As the tradition's global popularity has grown, particularly with Hollywood films like "Coco" and "The Book of Life," festivities have become larger and more elaborate.

After the 2015 James Bond film "Spectre" featured an elaborate Day of the Dead parade snaking through downtown Mexico City, officials held a real-life version, which included dancers in bright costumes and floats with images of giant skulls. The parade has since become an important tourist attraction for the capital, with 2.6 million attending in 2019.

In the United States, cities with large Mexican populations like Los Angeles, Chicago and San Antonio also hold celebrations, including parades, exhibitions and street fairs.

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November

November 2022 Calendar

*Lung Cancer Awareness Month
National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month*

- 1 – All Saints Day (Christianity)
- 2 – Day of the Dead (Mexico)
- 6 – Daylight Saving Day (US)
- 7 – Dev Deepawali (Hindu)
- 8 – Election Day (US)
- 11 – Veterans Day (US)
- 14 – World Diabetes Day
- 16 – World COPD Day
- 19 – National Adoption Day (US)
- 20 – Transgender Day of Remembrance (US)
- 24 – Thanksgiving Day (US)
- 27 – First Sunday of Advent (Christianity)
- 29 – National Day of Giving (US)

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What items are placed on an altar?

Altars normally have multiple levels: Two levels symbolize the earth and the sky, three levels can represent heaven, earth and purgatory, while seven levels signify the seven steps to enter the afterlife, or the seven deadly sins.

Every ofrenda includes items meant to correspond to the four elements: earth, water, air and fire. Ashes or dirt typically stand in for earth. A glass of water lets the spirits quench their thirst after a long journey, and tissue paper carved with elaborate motifs is commonly used to represent air. Candles signify fire, helping guide the dead home.

Altars also often feature small skulls made of sugar or chocolate, as well as pan de muerto. For altars to children, some place a small toy dog while a woven rug offers souls a place to rest. The favorite food, drink or other items beloved by the dead are important, too, as well as copal, a kind of incense to cleanse the space.

Which flowers symbolize the Day of the Dead?

The most important flower is the marigold, though its meaning varies. Its bright yellow petals are said to represent the sun and act as a guide for the souls of the dead to return home. Other significant flowers include white baby's breath, which can stand for purity, as well as the bright red velvet flower, which often add a splash of color to ofrendas

What is pan de muerto?

Pan de muerto, or bread of the dead, is a traditional Mexican pastry. Central to Day of the Dead celebrations, it is placed on the altar as an offering and also eaten as a tasty treat throughout October.

Like much of the celebration, the pastry has its roots in Aztec culture of centuries past, when different kinds of traditional breads would be used as offerings. Round in shape, with a pair of crossed bones and a circle representing a skull made of pastry on top, the pan de muerto is similar in texture to challah, usually sprinkled with sugar or other toppings.



A Guide To Nahuatl, An Influential Language Rich In History

Source: <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/indigenous-languages-nahuatl>

Some academics believe Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs formerly and the Nahua people today, means “something that sounds good.” If true, it’s a fitting name for a language with such a storied past. It’s believed that the origins of the Nahuatl language go back to least 2000 BCE in southwest North America, where you now find the states of Nevada, Utah and Colorado. Over millennia, the language expanded to distinct regions of Mexico, and with the expansion of the Aztec civilization, it extended through Central American and was adopted by the conquered peoples.

Classical Nahuatl was the quintessential language of communication, considered the most elegant and widespread, the language of science, art and religion. Even though the conquistadors-imposed Spanish as the first language, Nahuatl survived and could be passed on because it was the language of alliances and evangelization.

Today there are 7 million speakers of indigenous languages in Mexico, located mostly in the central regions of the country; the Gulf and Pacific coasts; and in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Of them, about one-fourth are Nahuatl speakers, with dozens of Nahuatl dialects that differ greatly in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary (as well as history).

A Bit Of Nahuatl Grammar

Nahuatl is a flexible language characterized by its use of suffixes and prefixes for both derivation and inflection. A word is composed of a root morpheme and one or more grammatical morphemes that allow it to form new concepts. An important detail is the differentiation between animate and inanimate nouns, which is shown clearly in the singular and plural forms. Some suffixes that are used for singular nouns are: ti, tli, li, n or no suffix. For example:

cihuatl — woman **nantli** — mother **mixton** — cat **tlalxcalli** — tortilla **tepozcahuayo** — bicycle

To form the plural when referring to people and animals, the suffix is removed and the particle meh is added. Inanimate objects, however, don't make this distinction.

ciuameh — women **nanmeh** — mothers **mixtomeh** — cats **tlalxcalli** — tortillas **tepoxcahuayo** — bicycles

To express uncountable objects, you add the adverb of quantity miak, which means “much.”

miak xali — sand **miak potli** — smoke

Nahuatl is a dynamic language with adjectives, adverbs, conjugated verbs, rhetorical figures and everything you need to communicate in any context. It also has an extensive vocabulary that varies from region to region depending on the spatial, social and cultural conditions where it's spoken.

Nahuatlismos: Spanish Words That Come From Nahuatl

Many words used today by Spanish speakers originally come from the language of the Aztecs. From A to Z, Nahuatl is present in the Spanish vocabulary. And as you'll see, a lot of these Nahuatlismos were adopted straight into English.

ahucatl — aguacate (“avocado”) **tlalcacahuatl** — cacahuete (“peanut”) **cacahuatl** — cacao **coyotl** — coyote **chapolin** — chapulín (“grasshopper”)

Due to its contact with the indigenous language, Mexican Spanish has adopted many Nahuatl words that don't exist in other Spanish-speaking countries. It's said that there are around 4,000 Nahuatl words that Mexicans use to talk about food, home and other things here and there.

New Proposed Rule on Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act May Expand Language Access in U.S. Health Care

Source: <https://slator.com/new-proposed-rule-section-1557-may-expand-language-access-us-healthcare/>

On August 4, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published a proposed rule in the Federal Register related to Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Enacted in 2010, the ACA expanded health care access eligibility to people previously without health insurance in the U.S. Section 1557 prohibits discrimination on the basis of several protected classes. According to the proposed rule: “For limited-English-proficiency [LEP] individuals, the lack of proficiency in English and the use of non-English languages is often tied to their national origin. The provision of free and effective language assistance services to LEP individuals is essential to ensure compliance with nondiscrimination laws.”

The new rule will reverse certain changes made during the Trump administration. For example, health care providers were not required to post notices informing patients of their language access rights. Other provisions to be restored by the proposed rule include standards for video remote interpreting and a requirement that health care entities with 15 or more employees designate an individual to coordinate compliance.

Bill Rivers, advocacy consultant for the Association of Language Companies (ALC), said that language access advocates—including representatives from the American Translators Association, ALC, and other organizations—have been working for several years to get these provisions put back in. The proposed rule would also apply Section 1557 to Medicare Part B, which pays for many outpatient services. While Section 1557 has always applied to Medicare Part A (hospital services), Medicare Part C (managed care), and Part D (prescription drugs), language access has yet to be classified as fully reimbursable by Medicaid or Medicare. “Right now, it’s all sticks and no carrots, but if you’re denied language access you can file a complaint,” Rivers said.

Public comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until October 3, 2022. The National Health Law Program (NHeLP), which works to protect and advance health rights for low-income and underserved individuals and families, plans to create a comment portal and template comments. NHeLP hopes organizations will encourage members to submit feedback.



New Staff Profile: Sharia Bokhari

Sharia is our newest interpreter joining the UCDH Medical Interpreting team. She was born in Pakistan and came to the United States along with her family when she was 13 years old. Sharia received a bachelor’s degree in Biological Sciences with a minor in Education from UC Davis. She has been a certified medical interpreter since 2019.

Sharia feels fortunate to be part of the UCDH Medical Interpreting team where she gets to interpret in three languages: Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi. The satisfaction Sharia gets from helping the South Asian community is beyond words. Over the years, she has been lucky to witness how cultural and linguistic awareness resulted in enhanced patient satisfaction and better clinical outcomes.

Sharia feels passionate about making a change in society. As a medical interpreter, Sharia can use her linguistic skills to work for health equity, give voice to people who cannot communicate in English, and reduce the risks associated with misunderstanding a diagnosis or a treatment plan.

In addition to interpreting, Sharia works full-time at a Genentech as a Bioprocess Manufacturing Technician where she was able to discover and develop medicines for people with serious and life-threatening diseases such as Perjeta, Herceptin, Ocrevus, etc.

In her free time, Sharia likes gardening and spending some quality time with friends and family at home. She also loves hiking, camping, and rock climbing, which she feels connects her to nature.

Welcome aboard, Sharia! We are glad to have you as a part of our Medical Interpreting team!