

Día de los Muertos/ Day of the Dead

FACT SHEET

- ❖ Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a festival celebrated on November 2nd by people in Mexico, parts of Central and South America, and increasingly throughout the United States.
- ❖ Day of the Dead is not a sad or scary occasion, but a spirited holiday when people remember and honor family members who have died. All of this is part of the philosophy that death is not something to be feared, but a natural part of life.
- ❖ People celebrate in their homes, creating altars (called *ofrendas* in Spanish) that display portraits, favorite foods, and special possessions of their loved ones.
- ❖ Altars are also decorated with candles and marigolds—the light of the candle and scent of the flowers (called *cempasuchitl*) are said to attract the souls of the deceased and draw them back for a short time to take part in the pleasures they once enjoyed in life.
- ❖ Families also visit the graves of their loved ones, cleaning the headstones, and decorating with flowers, and bringing food and music
- ❖ The roots of Day of the Dead are pre-Colombian, and many of the symbols and practices are derived from the indigenous groups of Meso America (Maya and Aztec, e.g.).
- ❖ Images of skeletons dancing or doing other comical things are common.
- ❖ Octavio Paz, a native of Mexico and winner of the 1990 Nobel Prize in literature, observes “The word death is not pronounced in New York, in Paris, in London, because it burns the lips. The Mexican, in contrast, is familiar with death, jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it, it is one of his favorite toys and his most steadfast love.”
- ❖ For more information, visit <http://www.mexconnect.com/mex /feature/daydeadindex.html>



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