

★ What Is DAY OF THE DEAD?



Every year, millions of people all around the world celebrate a holiday called *Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead. The celebration is all about remembering loved ones who have passed away. Each year on November 1 and 2, the departed are welcomed back to the land of the living to celebrate the best of life.



This festival has its roots in Aztec and other indigenous Latin American cultures. People honored and tended to the dead with rituals and ceremonies. Today, people celebrate by building *ofrendas* (altars) in their homes and visiting the cemeteries where their loved ones are buried. The departed are offered special food, sugar skulls, candles, and flowers. Although some symbols of the festival look spooky, it's actually a time of joy and celebration.



DID YOU KNOW?



Every year, millions of monarch butterflies return to Mexico in a mass migration. It's thought that the butterflies are spirits of the dead coming back for the Day of the Dead celebrations.

What Is an OFRENDA?

An *ofrenda* is an altar or shrine built to welcome the souls returning to visit their loved ones during the Day of the Dead. *Ofrendas* are stocked with food and drinks, which the departed will need after their journey from the afterworld, and decorated with candles, flowers, photographs of the dead, and *papel picado* (decorative paper banners).



You can construct your very own *ofrenda* with the press-out pieces in this book. The activities will give you ideas about what types of offerings to make and how to decorate your *ofrenda*.

DID YOU KNOW?

The celebration originally occurred during July and August, but the Spanish conquistadores changed the date to November 2 to coincide with All Saints' Day, a Catholic holy day.





Sugar Skulls



Have fun making and decorating sugar skulls with this easy recipe. (Make sure to ask an adult for help.) You can use the skulls to decorate your *ofrenda*.

You will need:

- ♥ 2 cups granulated sugar
- ♥ 1 egg white
- ♥ 1 tablespoon corn syrup
- ♥ ½ teaspoon vanilla extract



Makes: 3-4 two-inch skulls

Time: approx. 1 hour (and overnight)

1. Sift the sugar into a large mixing bowl.
2. In another bowl, mix the egg white, corn syrup, and vanilla extract.
3. Pour the liquid mixture into the sugar slowly. Mix by hand until a sandy dough forms.
4. Refrigerate dough for one hour. Pinch into skull shapes, or use molds to form the skulls. (Molds can be bought at specialty stores or online.)
5. Let the skulls dry overnight.
6. Once dry, decorate with icing or food coloring.





Papel Picado

Use the materials below to make a colorful *papel picado* for your Day of the Dead celebration.

You will need:
colored tissue paper
(cut into 8" x 8" squares)
scissors
string
adhesive tape

1. Fold a piece of tissue paper in half from edge to edge. Repeat three or four times.
2. Cut shapes in the paper, being careful not to cut off any corners.
3. Unfold the tissue paper completely.
4. If desired, decorate the edges by cutting zigzags or fringe.

5. Fold the top of the paper (about ½ inch) over a long piece of string and tape it.
6. Use a few sheets of tissue paper to make a long streamer.



→ DID YOU KNOW? ←

Papel picado is a popular Mexican craft with Aztec roots used to make banners to decorate *ofrendas*, streets, and buildings during the Day of the Dead.

