

Day of the Dead

What do you think of when you hear Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)? For some we think of Dia de los Muertos as a celebration where we get to dress up as la Catrina ('Dapper Skeleton') or paint our faces as skeletons during Halloween. This historical celebration dates back to the pre-Hispanic culture of the indigenous people; believe it or not Dia de los Muertos is a celebration that has been traced back to an almost 3,000 year old celebration. The festival was a



celebration dedicated to the goddess of the dead Mictecacihuat, which was celebrated by the Aztec and the Mayan

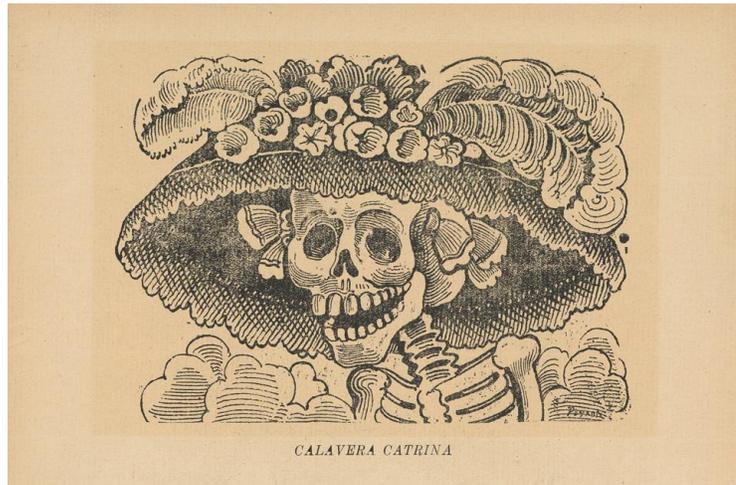
When the Spaniards invaded Mexico they viewed the celebration as something out of the ordinary. They saw death as the ending of life while the indigenes viewed death as a celebration

something to look forward to, and something one should not be afraid of. The Spaniards later moved the celebration of the indigenous form August to November so it would coincide with the Catholic celebration of All Saints Day and All Souls Day.

Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos, All Saints Day, All Souls Day) however you might refer to it is a two day celebration which is celebrated throughout Mexico. In which the veil is lifted between the two realms, the living and the dead are reunited to share one night together. The start of the celebration begins on 'All Hallows Eve' October 31st and ending on November 2nd. November 1st is dedicated to the little kids who have departed Dia de los Angelitos (All

Saints Day). November 2nd is dedicated to all the adults Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) . On the 31st of October families start setting up their altares (altars). Altars are decorated with candles, marigolds, fruit, pan de muertos (bread of the dead), their love ones favorite food, sugar skulls incents and water (for the spirits to keep hydrated). It is said that the pungent sent from the marigolds and incents used to decorate the altars helps the guide the dead back to the home of their love ones. Candy and toys are added to the altars that are dedicated to the children, shots or bottles of mezcal and tequila are added to the altars dedicated to the adults. On November 2nd families will clean and decorate the tombs of their departed love ones with more flowers and candles. Some families would spend the entire night at the cemetery celebrating their departed with food, drinks, memorable stories and music.

Along with the decoration of the tombs and the altars and the meaning the marigold flower has on the Day of the Dead, La Catrina



(Dapper Skeleton) also plays a role in the celebration. When the image of La Catrina was first created by a Mexican print maker Jose Guadalupe Posada in 1910 during the Mexican revolution, the image was created to describe the people who were ashamed of their indigenous origins. Dressed imitating the French style of the time La Catrina has now become the representation for the Day of the Dead.

Day of the Dead is not only celebrated in Mexico it is now being celebrated in some parts of the United States. During the Dia de los Muertos one is able to find events celebrating this

Mexican tradition. In Los Angeles, Hollywood Forever Cemetery provides an event every year showcasing the Mexican tradition of Day of the Dead with music, dancing and altar display.

From the start of this Mexican tradition Dia de los Muertos have come a long way. You are now able to see some sort of representation of Dia de los Muertos in almost everything, from textile prints, to jewelry and even some painting.