Day of the Dead-Dia de los Muertos

Around the World, many cultures have festivals intended to honor the dead.

Festivals of the Dead around the world

Mexico and Latin America are most prominent in Day of the Dead celebrations, but other countries and traditions also have festivals similar to Day of the Dead. In most of Western Europe and North America, we have Halloween and All Saints’ Day, which are related to the pagan Samhain celebrations. In some Southeast Asian countries, including South Korea, Japan, and China, similar festivals celebrating the deceased exist, but happen at different times of the year.

Today’s Menu includes:

Pan de Muerto: Meaning “bread of the dead,” is often served in celebrations of Mexico's Day of the Dead in November. The holiday is often celebrated with activities, including eating foods that were favored by dead relatives. Various foods are often left by people at the graves of dead loved ones, as well as altars created to remember those who have died.

Corn on the husk

Mexican Style hot Chocolate

FUN FACTS:

♦ Sugar Skulls Are Actually Candy
Many of us hear the words “sugar skull” and think of women in elaborate face paint on Halloween. In all actuality, these costumes are just drawing inspiration from a long-standing tradition that’s pretty sweet: candy skulls that are actual sugar. These candies are made from sugar cane, elaborately decorated with vegetable dyes and often stamped with the names of the deceased to be used as offerings at altars and gravesites.

♦ It’s Not Meant to Be Scary
Day of the Dead festivities are colorful, lively celebrations. The belief is that birth and death are inevitable events and both should be celebrated. In some ways, Day of the Dead is actually a celebration of life.

♦ La Calavera Catrina Was Created as Satire
One of the most recognizable symbols of Day of the Dead celebrations is a figure known as la Calavera Catrina, a skeleton dressed in upper class attire from the early 20th century. Catrina was originally drawn circa 1910 by the famous Mexican artist Jose Guadalupe Posada as a critique of indigenous peoples in Mexico who tried to be more European. Catrina was later co-opted into a symbol of class warfare during the Mexican Revolution. Eventually, she became a symbol of the Day of the Dead when Diego Rivera painted her in a mural in 1948. She’s been associated with the holiday ever since and people now buy and make Catrina dolls as part of their celebrations.

The Cultural Diversity Celebration was established to promote awareness of various cultures, their histories, and their contributions to the global community. This celebration includes information and cuisines from the regions showcased in order to enhance cultural understanding. This event provides an opportunity to highlight the amazing diversity among the faculty, staff, residents, and student body of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso.

If you have any questions, please email DiversityInclusionGlobalHealth@ttuhsc.edu.
Halloween, one of the world’s oldest holidays, is still celebrated today in a number of countries around the globe. Halloween evolved from the ancient Celtic holiday of Samhain, but over the centuries Halloween transitioned from a pagan ritual to a day of parties, costumes, jack-o-lanterns and trick-or-treating for kids and adults.

IRELAND— In Ireland, which is considered to be where Halloween started, the day is still celebrated much like it is in the United States and Canada. Traditions include bonfires in rural areas; the bonfires are lit as they were centuries ago. All over the country, children and adults alike revel in the popular Halloween holiday costumes and spend the evening "trick-or-treating" in their neighborhoods, and/or attending costume parties.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA— In Czechoslovakia, chairs are placed by the fireside on Halloween night. There is one chair for each living family member and one for each family member’s spirit.

GERMANY— In Germany, people put away their knives on Halloween night. The reason for this is because they don’t want to risk harm to (or from) returning spirits.

CHINA— In China, the Halloween festival is known as Teng Chieh. Food and water are placed in front of photographs of family members who have departed while bonfires and lanterns are lit in order to light the paths of the spirits as they travel the earth on Halloween night.

MEXICO— In Mexico, day of the dead traditions are designed to honor the dead with altars, flowers, candles, food & drinks the deceased liked. It starts on Oct 31 through Nov 2nd. People dress as skeletons and dance on the streets. It’s a joyous and happy holiday.

Pitu Paksha, India and the Hindu

On this day, Hindu people honor their ancestors as far as seven generations back. They begin by bathing in sacred ponds and rivers, and continue by offering prayers and food to their ancestors as they return from the afterlife for the night to feast.

Day of the Dead tradition—Galungan, Bali

In Balinese tradition, this is the night that ancestral spirits return to their homes looking to be welcomed and entertained, or else they’ll hunt the place. To keep that from happening, huge feasts are prepared in their honor.

Il Giorno dei Morti/U juornu re muorti – Italy, Sicily

In Italy, Day of the Dead is celebrated on Oct. 31 and begins as a somber, religious occasion. People attend mass before traveling to the cemetery and decorating the tombs of those they lost with flowers, usually mums. There is a bright side, however. In Sicily, the festival is kind of like Christmas. Children wake up to find treats left behind from "the dead"...but only if they behave for "i bonarmuzza re muortieddi" (the good souls of the dead).

Araw ng mga Patay (Day of the Dead) – The Philippines

Celebrations around this time of year in the Philippines are very similar to those in Mexico. Filipino families attend mass and "novena," which offers prayers directly to deceased relatives and loved ones. Then families migrate to the cemeteries, where they repair, decorate and sometimes even drink and eat dinner beside the graves. Tradition says that the souls of the dead return to Earth around this time, so those celebrating want to make them feel as welcome as possible.

Dia de los ñatitas (Day of the Skulls) – Bolivia

While most Latin American countries celebrate the Day of the Dead as well as All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day in one form or another, Bolivia brings skulls to the table—quite literally. Bolivians rush to get their hands on human skulls, whether from medical professionals or even buying them from cemeteries. The next step is to decorate the skull, often with props and jewelry, and take it to the graveyard for a large, annual mass that many believe brings good luck.