



Días de los Muertos

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The Altar (ofrenda)

The altar includes the four main elements of nature – earth, wind, water, and fire.

Earth is represented by crops. On Dias de los Muertos, the souls are fed by the food's aroma.

Wind is represented by a moving object. Tissue paper is commonly used to represent wind.

Water is placed in a container so the soul can quench its thirst after the long journey to the altar.

Fire is represented by a wax candle. Each lit candle represents a soul, and an extra one is placed for the forgotten soul.

Common misconceptions about the Day of the Dead

- The dead are not mourned. Their lives are celebrated by picnics at gravesites and altars in homes. Altars can be decorated with pictures, flowers, food, and sugar skulls.
- Day of the Dead is not a Mexican version of Halloween. It has been celebrated since 1800 B.C.
- The celebration is not scary or morbid. There are no images of dead people, ghosts, witches, or the devil.
- Day of the Dead does not honor death, but dead relatives. It is an opportunity to reflect upon life, heritage, ancestors, and the meaning and purpose of existence.
- Altars, or *ofrendas*, are not constructed for worship but for offering love and remembering departed family members.
- It is not a sad ritual. It's a day of happiness to remember loved ones.
- It is about love, not fear.
- It is not a strange ritual – it's similar to going to a grave and leaving flowers, or lighting a candle.