



Día de los Muertos: Discovering Mexican Heritage
Baking Lesson Plan for middle school students
Classroom discussion and baking activity

About Día de los Muertos

Día de los Muertos, or *Day of the Dead*, is a holiday celebrated on November 1 and 2 in Mexico and other Latin American countries. It's a time to remember and honor loved ones who have passed away. This holiday combines ancient Aztec traditions, which go back over 3000 years, with the Catholic observances of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. *Día de los Muertos* has spread beyond Latin America, and now it is celebrated in communities around the world.

On *Día de los Muertos*, families celebrate by visiting the graves of their loved ones to clean and decorate them with bright flowers and candles. They share stories, tell funny memories, and bring their loved ones' favorite foods. Many families also create an *ofrenda*, or altar, in their homes. These altars are decorated with special items like food, flowers, candles, photos, and personal mementos to welcome the spirits back for a joyful reunion. One traditional food offering is *Pan de los Muertos*, or *Bread of the Dead*, which is sweet and decorated to symbolize life and death.

While *Día de los Muertos* and Halloween both happen around the same time and share the theme of death, they come from different cultures and traditions. Halloween began with Celtic rituals in Europe, while *Día de los Muertos* is deeply rooted in Latin American customs and beliefs. Both holidays take place in the fall because this time of year has long been seen as a period of change, marking the shift from the harvest to winter, when societies honor life and remember the cycle of death.

In Mexican and Latin American culture, *Día de los Muertos* sees death as a natural part of life. Instead of sadness, the holiday is filled with laughter, joy, and celebration, as families remember their loved ones with happiness. Tradition even says that being sad would make the spirits feel unwelcome, so *Día de los Muertos* is a day for honoring the lives of those who came before us with a bright and joyful heart.