

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS CELEBRATION

Personal Ofrenda



Vocabulary: *Día de los Muertos, ofrenda, indigenous, Mictecacihuatl*

Overview: **Día de los Muertos** (Day of the Dead) is a yearly religious and cultural celebration to remember loved ones who have died. The celebration began as a springtime Aztec festival honoring the goddess **Mictecacihuatl (mik-tay-kah-SEE-wahf)**, the queen of death and the underworld. When the Spanish invaded Mexico in the 16th century they tried to eliminate the traditions of the **indigenous** people, or people who were originally living there. To keep their celebration alive, the **indigenous** people changed the timing of their tradition to align with the Spanish holidays of All Hallows' Eve, All Saints Day, and All Souls Day.

Today **Día de los Muertos** celebrations include many different components. Part of the celebration is spending time with the spirits of loved ones. Brightly colored and sweet-smelling flowers, like marigolds, are used to help guide the spirits back to their graves where families set up **ofrendas**, or altars, and share in food and entertainment like music. Families have **ofrendas** at home too. The **ofrenda** at home might include a photo of the person or people you're remembering and may also include personal possessions from a loved one, like a favorite object or article of clothing, or a person's favorite food and drink.

Materials:

- Container to decorate, such as a shoebox or cereal box
- Brown paper grocery bags or newspaper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Markers, colored pencils, crayons, or paints
- Other decoration materials like pom-poms, stickers, or magazine paper for collage

Don't have something on this list? Be creative! What can you reuse from your recycle bin or kitchen cupboards?

Let's make our own personal **ofrenda**!

1. Choose a container or box for the base of your memorial **ofrenda** or altar.
2. Cover the surface of your box with a brown paper bag, newspaper, or other paper.
3. Think about who you want to honor with your **ofrenda**. Draw a picture of or write down the name of that special person. Do you know what that person's favorite things were? Consider their favorite color, foods, holidays, or activities and use these favorites as inspiration for how you decorate your ofrenda.
4. Decorate your **ofrenda** by coloring the surface or creating a collage by cutting out images and gluing them on your box. Be creative and find other materials you have at home to decorate your **ofrenda**.
5. Keep your **ofrenda** in a special place where you can see it and be reminded of the person for whom it was made.

Take a picture of your ofrenda and share it with us by tagging @thewaltersartmuseum on Instagram or Facebook. We also invite you to share a picture or a memory of a loved one you've lost via this year's digital community ofrenda. Learn more about the digital community ofrenda and how you can contribute on our website www.thewalters.org.

COLLECTION CONNECTION

Maize Deity

Aztec (Mexico) Artist, 1400-1521 (Late Postclassic),
volcanic stone with traces of red pigment, 2009.20.199
H: 21 5/8 x W: 7 11/16 x D: 5 3/4 in. (54.86 x 19.56 x 14.61 cm)
Not on View



Collection Connection: This sculpture represents the goddess Chicomecoatl (CH-iy-KoMeh-KWaaL) meaning “seven serpent” who is the deity of ripened maize (corn). She is a favorite goddess of farmers and is frequently associated with the harvest. Statues of Chicomecoatl are common because corn was one of the most important food sources for the Aztecs. Corn was and is used to make different types of food like tortillas, tamales, or ātōlli, a corn porridge similar to grits. Larger sculptures of the Maize Deity with complicated details were more likely to be in an important public place like a temple, while the smaller more simple sculptures were more likely to be in a family’s home. Can you see some connections between the Maize Deity and the ofrenda you created? In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?