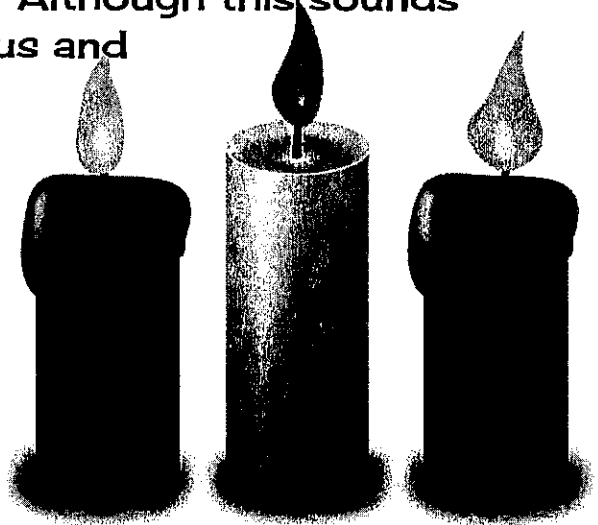


Halloween in Mexico

Among Spanish-speaking nations, Halloween is known as "El Dia de los Muertos." or Day Of The Dead. Although this sounds rather depressing, it is actually a joyous and happy holiday because it is a time to remember friends and family who are no longer alive. The three-day celebration begins on the evening of October 31. Designed to honor the dead who are believed to return to their homes on Halloween, many families construct an altar in their home and decorate it with candy, flowers, photographs, fresh water and samples of the deceased's favorite foods and drinks. This little alter is called ofrendas. Frequently, a basin and towel are also left out in order that the spirit can wash prior to indulging in the feast. Candles and incense are burned to help the departed find his or her way home.



Another celebration around this time is called Feast of the Holy Souls or Fiesta de las Santas Animas. For this celebration, families begin the fiesta by cleaning their relatives' graves and adorning them with pine needles and flowers. The families assemble a temporary altar near the gravesite, stocking the altars with candles and all kinds of foods such as meat, beans, chilies, salt, tortillas, and fruit. Each person in the family then takes turns in talking to the departed spirit, offering it the food and assuring it that it is loved. The ceremonies go

on for several days, as every family has more than one grave to attend to. On November 2, relatives gather at the gravesite to picnic and reminisce. Some of these gatherings may even include a mariachi band!