

Hanal Pixan The Maya Celebration of the Dead



One of the most important traditions we celebrate year after year is Hanal Pixán, which means food of the souls in Maya. This is a very special day as we celebrate in a unique way what we believe to be the annual visit of the spirits of our deceased loved ones.

To welcome them, the traditional altar of the dead, better known as the ofrenda, is prepared, where very representative elements are placed.



These are the things you will find on a traditional altar:

- Photographs of the loved ones being remembered (or no photographs if it is an altar for the forgotten souls).
- A Catholic cross on the third level of the altar, representing heaven.
- White candles for adults and colored candles for children. They are placed on the altar and form a small path leading to it. It is said that they guide the souls back home with their light.
- A bowl of water and a little salt, symbolizing purification.
- Marigold flowers or other wildflowers.
- Incense, which carries the scent of the food prepared with love to invite the souls to descend to the feast.
- Sweets (plum candy, cassava, marzipan), seasonal fruits (tangerine, jícama, grapefruit), the deceased's favorite food or drink, and many traditional dishes such as pib, pan de muerto (bread of the dead), tacos de relleno negro, escabeche, atole, and hot chocolate.
- A white tablecloth for adults, and an embroidered colorful one for children.
- Their favorite cigarettes or beers, or wooden toys if it is for a child.



According to this tradition, the souls of the deceased return to Earth to visit the altars that their family and friends set up for them. On the night of November 2nd, these souls take with them the essence and flavors of what has been placed on the ofrenda.

In this way, even in death, they can continue to enjoy the pleasures of this world. This beautiful tradition, full of colors, love, music, celebration, and memories, has existed since pre-Hispanic times. Although it didn't have the same meaning and significance back then as it does now, we can see the roots and importance that our culture has given to death.



This year, 2024, the Festival of the Souls will feature a monumental altar measuring 16 x 4 meters in height at the Plaza Grande, with an explanation of its meaning for both tourists and locals. Visitors will also be able to leave offerings for their deceased loved ones. Additionally, don't miss the seventh edition of the Muchipollo Fair. You can check the activities, schedules, and venues for each event at this link. <https://www.merida.gob.mx/animas/>



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