

Day of the Dead festivities come to New Orleans

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In Mexico, the southwestern U.S. and parts of Latin America, festivities for Day of the Dead, or Dia de Los Muertos, will take place Friday and Saturday (Nov. 1 and 2), a holiday during which families come together to pay respect to relatives who have died and celebrate their life and rebirth to another world. At Tulane University, the Stone Center for Latin American Studies annually joins in the celebration of this important festival.



A Day of the Dead altar, by artist Cynthia Ramirez, includes items traditionally used to commemorate deceased relatives, friends or other important people. (Photo from the Stone Center for Latin American Studies)

After holding educational events earlier this month ? including one for K-12 teachers ? the center is joining with the Ogden Museum for Southern Art and the Consulate of Mexico of New Orleans for a Day of the Dead [celebration](#) on Thursday (Oct. 31) from 6 to 8 p.m. at the museum, 925 Camp St. in downtown New Orleans.

At the event, Mariachi Jalisco will perform traditional music of Mexico. Tickets to the event are available [here](#) or by calling 504-539-9608. Admission is free with Ogden membership.

Anthropologists and historians say that the holiday is a blend of the Catholic All

Saints' and All Souls' Days and pre-Columbian traditions that honored ancestors in a celebration of the dead. It is generally celebrated through the construction of altars to the dead, which feature food, paper decorations and representations of skeletons. The use of skulls is a common part of the Aztec rituals. Families also clean and decorate the graves of loved ones.

At the [workshop](#) on Oct. 15, K-12 teachers received DVDs, recipes and craft ideas about the Day of the Dead for their classrooms, says co-organizer Rachel Horowitz. She gave a presentation to the teachers about the pre-Hispanic roots of Day of the Dead and its role in history, while artist Cynthia Ramirez, who built an altar that is on display in the Ogden, spoke about the traditional elements of altar building for Day of the Dead.

Horowitz says that it is important to expose young students to these traditions to guide them to “accept differences and understand the variation in culture and tradition around the world.”

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