

Let's Celebrate Cinco De Mayo



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Table Of Content

Introduction

The History Of Cinco De Mayo

Cinco De Mayo Crafts

- Mexican Flag
- Green White And Red Chains
- Make Your Own Pinata
- Maracas
- Tissue Paper Flowers
- Sombrero Craft
- Paper Bag Poncho
- Ojos de Dios

Cinco De Mayo Songs

- Come Join the Fun
- Here Is our Piñata
- It's Cinco de Mayo Day
- Do you know the story of...

Cinco De Mayo Recipes

- Mexi Snack Mix
- Nacho Celery
- Cinnamon "Fried" Ice Cream
- Baked Chicken Burritos
- Casserole Mexicana
- Deep Dish Mexican Pizza
- Layered Dip
- Mexican Cocoa
- Mexican Egg Scramble
- Mexican Lasagna
- Mexican Rice and Veggie Skillet
- Hot Taco Salad
- Family Favorite Taco Salad
- Chicken Nachos
- Mexican Wedding Cakes

Resources

Introduction

May 5th is Cinco De Mayo, which is one of the major holidays in Mexico. We can have a lot of fun celebrating it in the U.S. as well. Make some of the suggested crafts, or try a few of the recipes in this report to introduce your child to Mexican culture.

Susanne Myers & Christine Steendahl

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A Brief History Of Cinco De Mayo

Cinco de Mayo (which means May 5th) celebrates a victory of the Mexican Army over the French Army in the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862.

It was a great victory because it was very unexpected. France at that time was still very powerful and had many troops in Mexico.

Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1810. But the Mexican War with the United States and the Mexican Civil War almost entirely wiped out the Mexican Treasury. During these wars, Mexico had borrowed heavily from European countries, including France. In the early 1860s, Mexico stopped paying France back. France's answer was to invade Mexico.

The French had tried to make Archduke Maximilian of Austria the ruler of Mexico. Under his command, French troops marched from the Gulf of Mexico toward Mexico City.

Mexican General Ignacio Zaragoza and about 5,000 troops met the 6,000-strong French army at the Battle of Puebla. The Mexican victory was incredible. It stopped the French cold, at least for awhile.

But more French troops returned, and this time they succeeded. French rule of Mexico was short, however. In 1867, pressure from the United States and from other concerns abroad convinced France to abandon its Mexican empire. Mexico was free once again.

The importance in the Battle of Puebla is in the ability of a smaller, more poorly equipped army to defeat a larger, well-equipped one. The Mexican people also showed that they were willing to defend their homeland from invaders. This victory also punched a hole in the European mystique, which held that European governments and armies were by their very nature more powerful than other, smaller countries and their armies.

Cinco De Mayo Crafts

Mexican Flag

This is a fun little Mexican Flag craft

- Construction Paper
- Red, White and Green Tissue Paper
- Glue
- Craft Stick

Cut the construction paper to the size of your flag. Mark three equal areas for each of the three colors of the flag. Tear little pieces of tissue paper and crumble them up. Cover each area of the flag in its appropriate color (green, white and red).

After both sides of your construction paper are covered, glue the craft stick to one side as the flag pole.

Green White And Red Chains

- Construction Paper in Green, White and Red
- Scissors
- Tape or Glue

Paper chains are a great way to decorate for any occasion. For Cinco De Mayo use the colors of the Mexican flag, green, white and red.

Cut the paper into equal strips about one inch wide. Make loops out of the paper by gluing or taping the two ends together.

Make Your Own Pinata

What would a Mexican fiesta or of course Cinco de Mayo celebration be without a pinata. Here's how to make your very own.

- Balloon
- Newspaper
- Paste
- Tissue Paper
- Scissors
- Candy

Blow up the balloon to the size you would like your pinata to be. Cut the newspaper in strips and then add paste to each and cover the balloon. Make sure the entire balloon is covered in at least four layers of newspaper and paste. Wallpaper paste works well for this by the way.

Let the balloon dry overnight. The next day, when the newspaper layer is completely hardened, cut a small opening in one side of the balloon. Add the candy to the inside, then tape or glue the cutout part back on.

Glue tissue paper all over the pinata to decorate. Add long strips of tissue paper to the bottom.

Maracas

- Empty Yogurt cups w/ lids
- Tape
- Popsicle sticks
- Small beans

Directions: Collect empty yogurt cups that still have the lids. Decorate a festive cover which will be taped around the yogurt cup to hide the words Tape a popsicle stick to one side of the cup (masking tape seems to hold better than glue). Put about 15 to 20 small beans inside the cup and tape closed.

Tissue Paper Flowers

- Tissue Paper in different colors
- Scissors
- Green Pipe Cleaners

Cut the tissue paper in squares of about 8 to 10 inches wide.

Layer a few (about 4 or 5) sheets of the paper on top of each other and fold them like an accordion.

Tie the pipe cleaner around the middle of the long, accordion-folded piece of tissue papers.

Fold both ends of the tissue paper up and gently pull the different layers of paper out to form the flower.

For colorful flowers use different colors of tissue paper for each flower. Wear it in your hair or add them to a vase.

Sombrero Craft

- Large Paper Plate
- Paper Bowls
- Hot Glue
- Glue
- Paint
- Yarn
- Small Pompoms
- Hole Punch

Paint plate and bowl. Hot glue the bowl to the bottom of the plate. Punch holes in each side. Tie yarn in holes and tie around child's neck. Decorate with more paint and glue pompoms around the brim of the hat.

You can also make mini sombreros for table decorations by using a small paper plate and a small Styrofoam cup.

Paper Bag Poncho

- Large Paper Grocery Bags
- Bright markers
- Paints
- Crayons
- Paint brushes and water

Cut a hole in a paper bag so that your or your child's head can fit through. Cut slits up both sides of the bag. Decorate the paper bag poncho with brightly colored markers or paints or crayons.

Ojos de Dios

Spanish for "eyes of God", Ojos de Dios are simple enough for a small child to create.

For each Ojo you will need:

- 2 Popsicle/craft sticks
- 2 or 3 colors of yarn
- Glue and scissors

Start by gluing the 2 sticks together in the shape of a cross (parents can do this the day before and have them ready to go for the kids). Wrap the first piece of yarn around one stick where the sticks intersect. Then wrap it around the next "arm" of the cross, repeating with each "arm" several times. When you are ready to change colors, snip the yarn and tie the end of the next color to it and start wrapping again. You may change colors as often, or as little, as you wish. When you are finished simply knot the end around the last arm. Tie or glue a loop of yard at one end in order to hang the completed artwork.

Cinco De Mayo Songs

Come Join the Fun

Sung to: "Frere Jacques"

Cinco de Mayo, Cinco de Mayo,
Is lots of fun, for everyone.
Many celebrations,
Loved ones get together.
Come join the fun, with everyone.

Here Is our Piñata

Sung to: "Sing a song of sixpence"

Here is our piñata
What a sight to see,
Filled with treats & goodies
Just for you & me.
When it's time to break it,
We'll circle all around
Then we'll scramble for the treats
That fall down to the ground.

It's Cinco de Mayo Day

Sung to: "The Farmer and the Dell"

It's Cinco de Mayo Day!
It's Cinco de Mayo Day!
Let's clap our hands and sing "Ole".
It's Cinco de Mayo today!

Do you know the story of...

Sung to: "Do you know the muffin man"

Do you know the story of, the story of , the story of
Do you know the story of this great and happy day?

Yes, I know that brave Juarez, brave Juarez, brave Juarez
Yes I know that brave Juarez Chased the French away

The French they had no right to rule ,no right to rule, no right to rule,
The French they had no right to rule Our lovely Mexico

Our soldiers and the people said, the people said, the people said
Our soldiers and the people said The French have got to go

So Juarez formed an army troop, an army troop, an army troop,
So Juarez formed an army troop to chase the French away

That's why we like to celebrate, celebrate, celebrate,
That's why we like to celebrate On the 5th of May

Cinco De Mayo Recipes

Mexi Snack Mix

- 3 cups bite-size cheese crackers
- 2 cups pretzels twists
- 1 cup salted peanuts
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons taco seasoning mix

Mix 3 cups bite-size cheese crackers, 2 cups pretzel twists and 1 cup salted peanuts in 2 1/2-quart microwavable bowl. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon vegetable oil; toss to coat. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons taco seasoning mix (from 1 1/2-ounce envelope); toss to coat. Microwave 2 minutes longer. Spread on waxed paper; cool 5 minutes before serving.

Nacho Celery

- 1 cup smoke-flavored cold-pack pasteurized process cheese spread
- 1 teaspoon taco seasoning mix
- 4 stalks celery, 10-inch

Mix 1 cup smoke-flavored cold-pack cheese spread and 1 teaspoon taco seasoning mix (from 1 1/4-ounce envelope) in small bowl. Spread mixture in four 10-inch celery stalks. Cut into 2-inch sections.

Cinnamon "Fried" Ice Cream

- 3 cups Cinnamon Toast Crunch® cold cereal
- 6 scoops vanilla ice cream (1/2 cup each)

Crush 3 cups Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal; place in shallow pan. Quickly roll 6 scoops (1/2 cup each) vanilla ice cream (1 scoop at a time) in cereal to coat. Place coated scoops of ice cream in ungreased 15 x 10 x 1-inch baking pan. Cover and freeze about 2 hours. Set oven control to broil. Uncover pan. Broil scoops with tops 6 inches from heat about 30 seconds or until coating is light brown.

Baked Chicken Burritos

Makes 8 servings

- 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 cups salsa, divided
- 2 cups shredded Mexican cheese blend, divided
- Salt and pepper
- 8 flour tortillas, 8-inch
- Optional: jalapeño rings
- Garnish: sour cream and salsa

Brown chicken in a 10" non-stick skillet over medium-high heat until juices run clear when pierced with a fork; drain. Reduce heat to low; stir in sour cream, 1-1/2 cups salsa, 1-1/2 cups cheese, salt and pepper. Stir until cheese melts and completely coats chicken. Divide chicken evenly and spoon into center of tortillas; roll up and place seam-side down in a 13" x 9" baking pan. Spread remaining salsa and cheese over burritos; sprinkle with jalapeño rings, if desired. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. Garnish with sour cream and salsa.

Serve with a side of Spanish rice and tortilla chips.

Casserole Mexicana

Makes 6 servings

- 1 cup celery chopped
- 1/2 cup green bell peppers diced
- 1/2 cup onions chopped
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 pound ground beef or ground raw turkey
- 1 to 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 14 1/2-ounce can tomatoes whole, cut up and juice reserved
- 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 8-ounce can corn whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 3 1/4-ounce can olives pitted, drained and chopped
- 1/2 cup cheddar cheese shredded

Preheat oven to 350°.

In a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat, saute celery, green pepper and onion in hot oil for 8 minutes or until crisp-tender. Crumble ground beef or turkey into skillet. Cook and stir until meat is no longer pink. Spoon off excess fat. Sprinkle meat mixture with chili powder and garlic salt and stir.

Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan over medium heat, cook and stir tomatoes with juice and cornmeal until very hot and thickened; remove from heat. Stir cornmeal mixture, corn and olives into skillet until blended. Spoon into a deep 1 1/2 -quart baking dish.

Bake for 25 minutes or until very hot in center. Sprinkle with cheese and bake 5 minutes longer or until cheese melts.

Deep Dish Mexican Pizza

Makes 6 servings

- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 4-ounce can green chilies diced, drained
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- 1 to 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 15-ounce package corn bread and muffin mix
- 3/4 cup water cold
- 2 eggs beaten
- 1/2 green bell pepper medium cut in very thin 1 1/2 -inch long slices
- 1 4-ounce can olives sliced, drained
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese shredded (about 4 oz.)
- 1 cup cheddar cheese shredded (about 4 oz.)
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese grated

Preheat oven to 450°. Generously grease a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan. In a medium bowl, mix tomato sauce, green chilies, onion, chili powder, oregano and garlic salt; set aside.

In another medium bowl, mix corn bread mix, water and eggs until smooth. Pour into baking pan. Spread sauce over top to within 1/2 inch of edges.

Arrange green pepper and olives on pizza. Top with cheeses. Bake in middle of oven for 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown and edges pull away from sides of pan.

Layered Dip

Makes 16 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) can refried beans
- 2 tablespoons salsa, chili sauce or ketchup
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 1 cup guacamole or prepared guacamole
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (4 ounces)
- 2 medium green onions, chopped (2 tablespoons)
- Tortilla chips or raw veggies for dipping

1. Mix refried beans and salsa. Spread in thin layer on 12- or 13-inch serving plate or pizza pan.

2. Spread sour cream over beans, leaving about 1-inch border of beans around edge. Spread guacamole over sour cream, leaving border of sour cream showing.

3. Sprinkle cheese over guacamole. Sprinkle onions over cheese. Serve immediately, or cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve. Serve with tortilla chips or raw veggies.

Mexican Cocoa

Makes 6 servings

- 4 cups milk
- 1 milk chocolate bar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon ground
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Pour milk into saucepan. Add the chocolate and stir over medium heat until chocolate is melted. Remove from heat and add the cinnamon and vanilla. Set aside. At serving time, return to heat and beat the mixture with a whisk until it is frothy and hot. Pour into cups.

Mexican Egg Scramble

Makes 4 servings

- 1/4 pound bulk Italian sausages
- 1/4 cup chopped onions
- 1/4 cup chopped green bell peppers or red bell peppers
- 6 eggs
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack-Colby cheese (4 ounces)
- 1/4 cup medium or mild salsa
- Tortillas, warmed if desired

Cook sausage, onion and bell pepper in 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until sausage is no longer pink; drain.

Beat eggs and milk in small bowl with fork. Add to sausage mixture. Reduce heat to medium. Cook about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until eggs begin to set. Gently stir in cheese. Continue cooking about 2 minutes, until cheese is melted and eggs are set.

Remove from heat. Spoon salsa over egg mixture. Serve immediately with additional salsa and tortillas.

Mexican Lasagna

Makes 6 servings

- 1 16-ounce bottle picante sauce as hot as you like it
- 1 14 1/2-ounce can tomatoes chopped
- 12 flour tortillas or corn or whole wheat
- 1 31-ounce can refried beans no fat added
- 1 onion chopped
- 2 green bell peppers chopped
- 1 can green chili peppers diced
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese part-skim, grated
- 2 tomatoes fresh, chopped
- Iceberg lettuce
- Sour cream fat free

In a medium saucepan combine picante sauce and chopped tomatoes; heat well.

Spread onto each tortilla 2 tablespoons of beans. Sprinkle with onions, peppers, and chilies (also a very small amount of cheese is good here). Roll tortillas and place in a 9 x 13 baking dish that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Continue rolling until all tortillas are done. (To make rolling easier, microwave 3 or 4 tortillas at a time for 30 seconds.) Pour sauce mixture over the tortillas. The sauce should cover very well. Sprinkle with remaining onions, peppers, chilies, and cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes or until heated through and bubbling. Garnish with fresh chopped tomatoes, lettuce, and fat free sour cream, if desired.

Mexican Rice and Veggie Skillet

Makes 4 servings

- 1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans, drained, rinsed
- 1 (14 1/2-ounce) can stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (10-ounce) can mild enchilada sauce
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked instant brown rice

In large nonstick skillet, combine all ingredients except rice; mix well. Bring to a boil. Stir in rice. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 18 to 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender, stirring occasionally.

Remove skillet from heat. Fluff mixture with fork. If desired, add salt and pepper to taste.

Hot Taco Salad

Makes 8 servings

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 envelope taco seasoning mix
- 1/2 16-ounce bag tortilla chips (or Nacho Dorito's)
- 1 small onion chopped
- 1 medium tomato chopped
- 1/2 head lettuce chopped

Sauce

- 4 tablespoons butter
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 pound velveta cheese

Brown Hamburger, drain, add taco seasoning mix and set aside.

Crush chips into the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish. Spread hamburger mixture over chips.

Layer onion, tomato and lettuce on top of hamburger.

In a large saucepan melt butter. Stir in flour and stir continuously until smooth. Stir in milk. Bring to a boil - stirring constantly and boil one minute. Add Velveta Cheese and stir until melted. Pour sauce over casserole.

Bake at 400 degrees for 10-15 minutes or until bubbly.

Family Favorite Taco Salad

Makes 6 servings

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 envelope (about 1 1/4 ounces) taco seasoning mix
- 1 cup water
- 1 (12-ounce) package tortilla chips
- 1/2 head lettuce, shredded
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 (2 1/4-ounce) can sliced ripe olives, drained
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese (4 ounces)
- 2/3 cup dairy sour cream

Cook and stir ground beef and onion in 10-inch skillet until beef is brown; drain. Stir in seasoning mix (dry) and water.

Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer uncovered 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Spoon beef mixture onto chips. Top with remaining ingredients.

Chicken Nachos

Makes 5 servings

- 24 round tortilla chips
- 1 16-ounce can refried beans
- 1 cup salsa - mild
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 1 10-ounce can chunk breast of chicken
- Garnish: olives, onion, tomatoes, etc.

Lay chips out on a large cookie sheet. Put beans on each chip. Then in a mixing bowl combine the salsa, sour cream and chicken. Then put 1 tablespoon of the chicken mixture on top of the refried beans. Top with cheese. Bake in a 350° oven for 12 minutes and then garnish according to taste.

Mexican Wedding Cakes

Makes 5 Dozen Cookies

- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup finely chopped or ground almonds or pecans
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar

1. Heat oven to 325°F. In large bowl, combine 1/2 cup powdered sugar, butter and vanilla; beat until light and fluffy. Add flour, almonds and salt; mix until dough forms. Shape into 1-inch balls. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets.

2. Bake at 325°F. for 15 to 20 minutes or until set but not brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheets. Cool slightly; roll in 1/2 cup powdered sugar. Cool 15 minutes or until completely cooled. Re-roll in powdered sugar.

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