



Día De los Muertos

Day of the Dead – November 1 & 2

Activity: *Calaveras (All Ages)*

Calaveras, or sugar skulls, are a traditional folk art from Southern Mexico used to celebrate *Día de los Muertos*. These *calaveras* usually bear the name of a deceased loved one, and are decorated with colorful icing, shiny foil, and bright sugars, to be eaten by children and older family members alike.

Calaveras in the Classroom:

Medium and mini skulls can be mixed and molded in one day, air-dried overnight, and ready for icing the next. The entire activity will take approximately two 50-minute sessions for 1-2 skulls per student.

National Visual Arts Standards Addressed:

- VA: Pr4.1.1a – Explain why some objects, artifacts and artworks are valued over others.
- VA: Cn11.1.1a - Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons
- VA: Cn10.1.4a – Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions.
- VA: Cr3. 1.1a- Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art.
- VA: Cr2.2.5a – Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools and equipment.

Calavera Materials & Recipe:

- 1 set of plastic skull molds (available at Michael's or Dollar Store)
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons meringue powder
- 2 teaspoons water
- 1 piece of cardboard, approximately 5" x 5"

Mix the dry ingredients together in a bowl. Sprinkle the water in and continue to mix until the sugar is completely moistened and has the consistency of wet sand. Scoop some mixture into the mold, packing it evenly and firmly. Place the piece of cardboard on top of the mold, then flip it over quickly so the skull pops out. Let dry for 24 hours. Continue making skulls with remaining mixture.

Icing Materials & Recipe:

- 2/3 cup water
- ½ meringue powder
- 2 pounds powdered sugar
- Electric mixer
- Concentrated food coloring (professional baker kind)
- Pastry or Ziploc bags
- Plastic cups

Blend the ingredients with an electric mixer until peaks form in the icing. If using assorted colors, scoop the white icing into separate bowls and add a dab of food coloring in each. Mix again. Scoop the icing into the pastry bag, or use a Ziploc bag with one corner snipped to apply frosting. Seal and keep refrigerated until use.

Let skulls dry completely before applying icing. After applying icing, let skulls dry completely before students take them home. Skulls will harden completely in about 24 hours, and will maintain their appearance for up to two years!