

Getting into the spirit

Latinos invite their dear departed to join the festivities during **The Days of the Dead**

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Halloween is always a spooky time in America, when ghosts and goblins and gory monsters come out to haunt. But south of the border, and in many Latino communities in this country, the spirits are more revered than feared during Day of the Dead celebrations — El Dia de los Muertos — on Nov. 1 and 2.

"In Mexico, death is celebrated in the midst of life," explains Rosalind Rosoff Beimler in *The Days of the Dead/Los Dias de Muertos*, a slim volume that pairs her text with photographs by John Greenleigh.

"Each autumn, the living invite their dead to join them in a festival of communion — to return home again and, for a few hours, to sit by the hearth and warm their cold bones before returning to the land of the dead."

Celebrants honor dead loved ones by erecting altars with sweets, treats and special mementos. They decorate gravesites and erect altars in homes and churches, heaped with photographs, flowers, fruits, candies and foods that the deceased loved to eat.

The Day of the Dead is rooted in Aztec culture, with a Catholic overlay from the priests

who trailed the *conquistadores* to the New World. According to tradition, the spirits of children who have died return to visit during the early hours of Nov. 1. Then it is time to welcome the souls of grown relatives and ancestors.

"At sundown, the family moves to the graveyard for an all-night vigil of communion with the dead," Beimler writes. "Candles are lit on the gravestones, one for each lost soul."

Skeletons and skulls are merry, not morbid, symbols of the holiday. Sugar candies in the shape of skulls are exchanged as welcome gifts.

Another vital part of the celebration is the sweet Pan de Muerto (Bread of the Dead), which is baked in different shapes to resemble skeletons or is fashioned into round loaves with small pieces of dough that are supposed to look like bones arranged on top.

Since the dead are believed to love sweet foods, Pan de Muerto is often left at gravesites in Mexico. The spirits of the dead consume the unseen aspects of the foods — such as strong aromas from chili-laced dishes — and afterward, the relatives may eat the food. ☐

For more, visit:

www.mexonline.com/daydead.htm
<http://daphne.palomar.edu/muertos/>

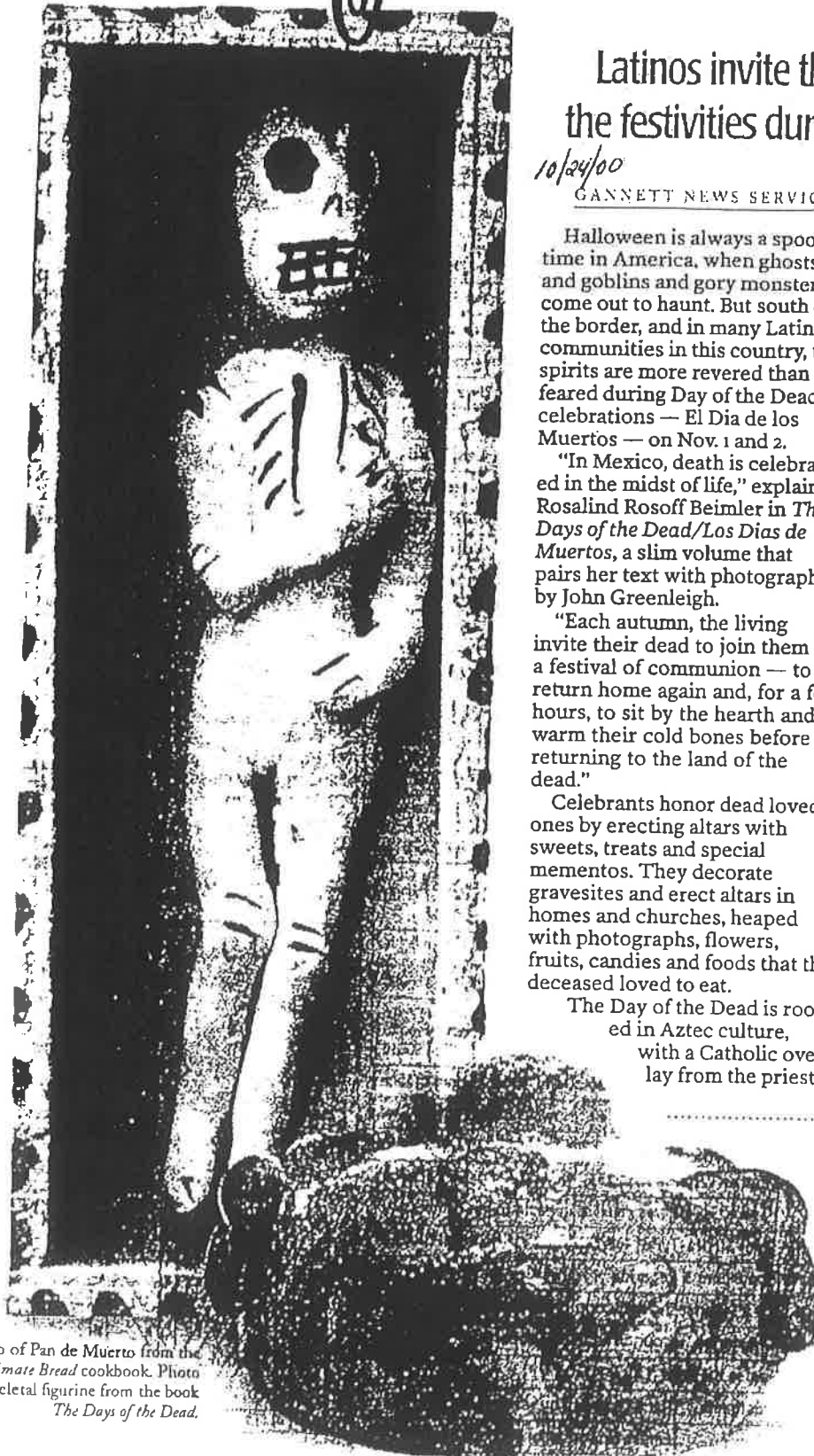


Photo of Pan de Muerto from the *Ultimate Bread* cookbook. Photo of skeletal figurine from the book *The Days of the Dead*.

In the circles below write the similarities between Día de los Muertos and Halloween in one circle, and the differences in the other.

Similarities

Differences

Día de los Muertos Vocabulary



Los angelitos	little angels
El anima	the soul
El ataúd	the coffin
Las calacas	the skeletons
Las coronas	the wreaths
Los cempazúchiles	marigolds
El chocolate	chocolate
La familia	family
La muerte	death
Las ofrendas	the altars
El pan de muertos	Dead Bread
El papel picado	punched-paper
Los recuerdos	memories
Las tumbas	the graves
Las velas	the candles



Día de los Muertos

b w c e x o t o c o e w c y a
d v a z t e y o f t e e a m a
s j l y t r r g a r m u i d g
o y a p e o e l t p e n r t t
l d c w n s o u a p a n w o t
f x a a d c m z m f r w d k i
z s s c o e ú y a i l i m a f
p o x h i c r e c u e r d o s
s t c r h p p n z r i d a k x
k i l i m t l a t a ú d d s v
v l l s o t r e u m e d n a p
x e z y z s c m p y i v p b x
s g l x h b j f i a g y g m h
l n u a z r w v c p p m b u l
x a u u s j x v u j i o y t d

Find the following words hidden in Spanish in the puzzle above:

Angels
Punched-paper
Graves
Wreaths
Candles

Soul
Dead Bread
Skeletons
Altars
Marigolds

Family
Memories
Death
Chocolate
Coffin