

Cinco de Mayo a day for celebration, but it's not the Fourth of July

By: Yolanda Lorge

May 5 is a day for celebration in the United States' Mexican American communities; On June 7, 2005, the U.S. Congress issued a Concurrent Resolution calling on the President of the United States to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe Cinco de Mayo with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In the United States Cinco de Mayo has taken on significance beyond that in Mexico. The date is perhaps best recognized in the United States as a date to celebrate the culture and experiences of Americans of Mexican ancestry, much as St. Patrick's Day, Oktoberfest, and the Chinese New Year are used to celebrate those of Irish, German, and Chinese ancestry respectively. Similar to those holidays, Cinco de Mayo is observed by many Hispanics.

Unfortunately, many don't know what they are celebrating. Many think it is Mexico's Independence Day.

In 1862, due to the tremendous cost of the Mexican war against the United States—which led to the loss of half of its territory—the Mexican government of Benito Juarez was forced to suspend payments of Mexico's foreign debt to some European countries.

England, Spain and France agreed on military intervention in order to protect their interests.

However, Napoleon III of France, who was seeking the possibility of establishing a colony in the Americas, proceeded to send troupes to invade Mexico. The holiday of Cinco de Mayo, "commemorates the victory of the Mexican militia over the French army at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. It is primarily a regional holiday celebrated in the Mexican state capital city of Puebla and throughout the state of Puebla, with some limited recognition in other parts of Mexico, and especially in U.S. cities with a significant Mexican population."

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This battle was significant in that the 4,000 Mexican soldiers were greatly outnumbered by the well-equipped French army of 8,000 that had not been defeated for almost 50 years. Second, it was significant because since the Battle of Puebla, no country in the Americas has been invaded by any other European military force.

Part of Grupo Latinoamericano's mission is to serve as a cross-cultural bridge in our community, to maintain and record the richness and variety of the Hispanic culture, folklore, customs and social life, as well as preserving our rich cultural heritage. And share it with the rest of the community. That is the main reason why we are organizing this Cinco de Mayo event, along with Tortillería Perches and KQMO 97.7 FM.

The first step in the process of cultural exchange is making contact. The first stage by which divisions are transcended, barriers are toppled and fears put aside, is sensorial, through music, food, and literature.

Then come respect and openness to different heritages. Then we build new alliances and fellowships. Like Will Rogers said, "There are no strangers, just friends I haven't met."

There are many people that are not like us, but that doesn't mean we can't communicate with them. It's a wonderful challenge to communicate with what is not like us.

Events like this are a cross-cultural experience in a form of fiesta. We know that they won't break down every barrier, but it's a start. And they are fun..



Mexican Folk Dancing

One of the most stunning and culturally rich dance expressions of its kind, the Mexican folk dance is a display of the colorful heritage of the country. The dance is heavily influenced by the complex history of Mexico, which includes the Spanish Colonial Period, the Mexican War of Independence and the 1910 Mexican Revolution. It showcases a unique mix of the cultural influences on the indigenous cultures in Mexico. This has now developed into a beautiful dance form, with its inspiring Mexican music and the rich colorful attire.

The History of Mexican Folk Dancing

Developed over five centuries, the Mexican folk dance is seeped in the history and culture of Mexico.

Folk dances in Mexico have traditionally been a way of honoring the Mexican culture and a representation of the struggles and joys of the daily Mexican life. It is a celebration of the religious and cultural rituals and festivals, celebrated by the people of that place.

The origin of Mexican folk dances lies in the Mesoamerican days, when ritualistic dance was performed to appease the deities by the Mayans and the Aztecs. When the Spanish arrived in the early 16th century, they brought with them, the European-style dances such as the waltz, ballet, polka and schottische, which greatly influenced the indigenous dance form. Subsequent conquests allowed the German, French, Spanish and Italian dances, to mingle with the original folk dance and the emergence of three forms of Mexican folk dance.

The first is 'danza', which is an indigenous ritual dance, performed in religious or community settings. The second category of Mexican folk dance forms is 'mestizo', which showcases the western influences on the indigenous dance, in either the steps or the theme. The 'bailes regionales' or the regional dances are a manifestation of the dance form by each community. This is usually presented in community and theatrical performances.

Types of Mexican Dances

Each region and state in Mexico, presents the Mexican dance form in a style that reflects its own unique customs and traditions. The characteristics are easily differentiable in the music, the dance and the costumes of the dancers. While some have a more indigenous expression in their folk dance, there are others who draw heavily from the European dance forms, such as the Flamenco.

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¡FESTIVAL DEL CINCO DE MAYO!

¿No puede ir a México? ¡Nosotros se lo traemos! Este 5 de Mayo, el Grupo Latinoamericano le invita al tradicional festival celebrando la Batalla de Puebla en su evento Cinco de Mayo.

Venga a disfrutar de la diversa y festiva cultura de México en una tradicional fiesta mexicana, llena de colorido con música en vivo, bailables folklóricos y auténticos antojitos mexicanos. Habrá también una feria con juegos mecánicos, juegos para niños y adultos, regalos y mucho más. Todo en un ambiente familiar.

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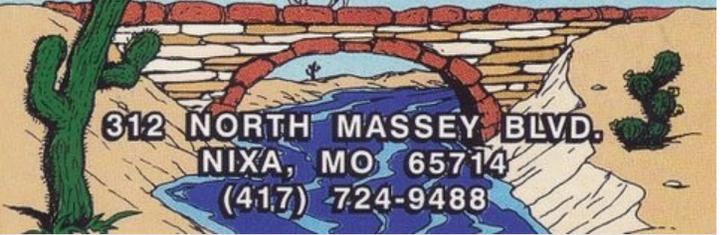


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