

## Remember Me

In Mexican culture, there are several traditions for honoring and remembering loved ones who have died.

One popular custom is to create a grotto, a small memorial decorated with stones and flowers. Grottos can be built far from the place where a loved one is buried, which is helpful for family members who are unable to visit a loved one's grave.

A grotto gives family members a special, quiet place to go where they can spend time remembering their time with the person they lost.

Grottos can be built near a loved one's grave, too. They may hold an object special to that person or the statue of a saint or other religious figure.

Grottos are also a place to pray, to talk to the loved one who has died, or simply to leave flowers in that person's memory.

Another type of memorial used in Mexico is an altar. Unlike grottoes, altars are created inside a home. They're often where photographs of a lost loved one are displayed. Special objects that belonged to the person may also be part of the altar.

On certain days, such as a lost loved one's birthday and during *Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, celebrations, family members may pay special attention to the altars in their homes. They may light candles on the altar and place real or paper flowers on it as they remember and celebrate the lives of those they love.

As part of Day of the Dead celebrations, some families bake or buy sweet bread, called *pan de muerto*, to place on the altar or to carry to a grotto in honor of their loved one.

Both grottos and altars provide a place to keep vigil—to spend time quietly remembering the past and the loved one who has died. And both altars and grottos are meant to keep a loved one's memory fresh and present in daily life.

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