

Mexico

The Culture

A. Music

1. *Tejano* music is a blend of pop, country, and blues music.
2. *Mariachis* are groups of six to eight musicians who wander around plazas playing songs for a fee. Band members dress in sparkling uniforms with wide brimmed hats.

B. Dance

1. *La Danza de los Viejitos* (or “Dance of the Little Old Men”) is one of the oldest dances in Mexico. Young men are made up to look like toothless, wrinkled old men. The dancers hobble around with walking sticks at first then suddenly leap up and start dancing energetically.
2. The *jarabe tapatío* (or Mexican Hat Dance) is the national dance.

C. Sports

1. *Fútbol* (or soccer) is the most popular sport.
2. *Béisbol* (or baseball) is almost as popular as soccer.
3. *Jai-jai* or *pelota* is a fast paced game which originated in Spain. It is played with a hard rubber ball and a wicker basket or *cesta* which is tied to the player’s wrist.
4. **Rodeos** can be watched in a ring where riders called *charros* (cowboys) perform tricks on horseback and rope bulls with lassoes.
5. Bullfighting is enjoyed from November to April. Expert bullfighters are called **matadores**.

D. Holidays

1. **The Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe** (December 12) commemorates Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, appearing to a poor Native American boy. A huge church was built on the site of the apparition.
2. **Las Posadas** (December 16-December 25) are daily re-enactments of Mary and Joseph seeking a place to stay in Bethlehem.
3. **Christmas** (December 25) *Nacimientos* or nativity scenes are proudly displayed in homes.
4. **Day of the Three Wise Men** (January 6) celebrate the arrival of the Three Wise Men at the birthplace of Jesus. *Rosca de los Reyes* is a delicious circular cake with a tiny porcelain doll baby mixed into the dough.
5. **Day of the Dead** (November 1-2) families honor dead relatives. *Pan de los Muertos* is a delicious coffee cake enjoyed at this holiday.
6. **Cinco de Mayo** (May 5) celebrates a battle won against the French troops in Puebla.
7. **Independence Day** (September 16) celebrates the day in 1821 when Mexico declared its freedom from Spain.

E. Food

1. A *tortilla* is flat bread made from cornmeal or flour. Tortillas can be rolled flat and baked or fried for tacos.
2. *Guacamole* is a dip or topping made from mashed avocados.
3. A *tamale* is a cornmeal paste often stuffed with pork or chicken wrapped in a corn husk or banana leaf, then steamed.
4. A *chile relleno* is a large, mild pepper stuffed with cheese then fried.
5. A *torta* is a generously filled sandwich in Mexico.
6. *Mole* is a sauce made with unsweetened chocolate, chilies, and spices.