

Bringing Mexico to Your Community!

Margaritas Restaurants concept is based on bringing Mexico to New England. Upon entering our restaurants you are surrounded with the art and atmosphere of Mexico. We make frequent trips to local artist communities in Mexico in search of authentic hand-carved furniture, folk art and décor for each Margaritas restaurant. During those trips we come in contact with many talented artisans. We have a wonderful way to share that experience with our community. We invite Mexican artists into our restaurants and local schools! This provides a unique opportunity for us to share our knowledge of Mexico, and for the community to meet outstanding Mexican folk artists. The artists share their techniques, lecture on life in present day Mexico and provide an interactive experience for students and teachers.



Visiting Artist-Isabel Castillo Izucar de Matamoros, Puebla



Isabel was born in Izucar de Matamoros, Puebla, in central Mexico. The Tree of Life and other figures she creates are inspired by five generations of artisans in her family. Isabel learned her art form from her mother and grandmother, the latter lived to be 105 years old. The animal, cactus and christmas candleholders in their bright and shiny colors are everyone's favorites.

She will be traveling to the United States with her daughter Lourdes, ceramic artist, and her daughter-in-law Rufina, a local school teacher and ceramic artist. Their ceramic sculptures have been featured in national contests. The Castillo family was awarded 1st prize for polychrome ceramic sculpture by

FONART, Mexico's national folk art foundation.

These artists have been selected based on their artistic achievements and their ability to communicate their unique creative vision passed down from preceding generations. It is hoped that they will spark the imaginations of students and generate enthusiastic workshops involving sculpture and design projects.



Tree of Life

The Tree of Life is more than a decorative object, it's symbolism and function blend European and Indigenous Mexican culture. Throughout history trees have served as symbols of fertility and rebirth. The candelabras in the shape of trees did not appear in Mexico until after the Spanish conquest. Traditionally the decoration of the trees refer to the story of the Creation, the Nativity or the Resurrection, but imaginative artists constantly invent new subject matter. With endless humor and color, the trees, portray life in a joyful, whimsical way that has universal appeal.



Ceramics in Mexico

Since the appearance of the Olmec culture, considered to be the “mother of the Mesoamerican cultures”, ceramics took a prevailing place in the lives of the Mexican people. The earthenware vessels, anthropomorphic figures, and various types of utensils found in the archaeological ruins of the ancient Olmec cities suggest the techniques used in their ceramics: the use of clay, the knowledge of some primitive firing techniques, their means of coloring and painting designs. The Olmecs transcended their era (1500 B.C. –800 A.D) and bequeathed their knowledge to the cultures that flourished after them.

The Teotihuacans (100 B.C. – 800 A.D.) prepared the majority of their vessels with clay and decorated them with a variety of techniques: mainly stucco, painting, and smoothing. The pottery of the Aztecs (1325 A.D. – 1521 A.D.) was extremely varied. They made all types of earthenware, plates, jugs, cups, pots, mostly with red and orange clay. The ancient techniques employed to make ceramics are still used today – mostly in the rural parts of Mexico.

When the Spaniards arrived, the blending of societies allowed the indigenous people to learn new techniques, and the combination of styles gave life to some of the more famous ceramic styles of Mexican earthenware. Mexican ceramics bring together the influences of pre-Hispanic, European, Arabic and Oriental cultures. Whatever technique is used, Mexican ceramics have an individuality and charm that is appreciated for its art and quality worldwide.

The art of pottery goes back many thousands of years in the New World, and demonstrates an astonishing range of imaginative skills. Probably no other continent has achieved such diversity of form and decoration. In the West clay has often been considered a substance inferior to stone or wood for plastic expression. In the Americas, however, it has afforded works of supreme artistry. Pottery-making, in the opinion of archaeologists such as G. C. Vaillant, was the greatest of all pre-Columbian crafts.

Over subsequent centuries clay was transformed by different peoples into water storage jars, pots of varying shapes and sizes, dishes, spindle whorls, jewelry, musical instruments such as flutes and rattles, incense burners, ritual vessels, funerary urns, idols, roof ornaments for temples, and figurines depicting animals, birds and human beings often engaged in everyday activities.



Artist Presentation

On the day of their visit, Isabel and her daughter Lourdes will demonstrate how to sculpt the figures used in their candelabras. They will then demonstrate their unique painting style, and explain all the facets involved in their craft. The materials and techniques are quite basic and it is hoped students will follow up this demonstration by creating their own figures with either their classroom teacher or art teacher. Hands on workshops are also available and encouraged if scheduling permits. Throughout the day students will have the opportunity to observe the various phases involved in making the figures. This includes sculpting and painting.

A display of crafts from Puebla, Mexico will also be exhibited. Isabel and Lourdes will explain the process' involved in their production. A video including scenes from Mexico will also be shown. Students will then have an opportunity to ask the visiting artist(s) questions. The purpose of this day long visit is to expose students to this unique country. They will be presented with many facets of life in Mexico. This experience will allow them to meet and talk with Mexican artists. Emphasis will be placed on the use of artwork in all aspects of life in Mexico; in religious ritual, traditional ceremonies, social gathering and personal expression.

At the end of the day, Isabel will present a finished sculpture to the school or site. This will remain as a lasting symbol of these unique artists from Mexico, whose presence in one day challenges, enlivens and stimulates those who come in contact with them.



Isabel and her son Fernando demonstrate.



Isabel and Rufina speak with students.

Student Activities

- * Consult school librarian for books about Mexico and folk art.
- * Spend class time studying Mexico.
- * Have students identify Spanish words they may know.
- * Learn some Spanish words or greetings.
- * Discuss some of the differences between the United States and Mexico
- * Discuss activities involved when traveling to other countries.
- * On the day of the artist's visit, observe the display of crafts.
- * Prepare questions for the artist(s).

SITE PREPARATION FOR GUEST ARTIST

* Provide a suitable space for artist(s) and exhibit, such as a multi-purpose room, large classroom or open area to accommodate 50-75 students(or more). This is for all Lecture/Demonstrations

- * Provide a table 2' x 8' and 3 chairs
- * Schedule no more than (5) 45 minute sessions (4 hours total contact time)
- * You may videotape all activities for future references



Topics for Discussion

FOLK ART- Folk art refers to art that is created within a community or region reflecting local or generational experiences. Often the techniques and traditions are passed on from one member of the family to the other. Many of the crafts produced by folk artists include wood carving, ceramics, basket-making, weaving, embroidery, metalwork, etc.

- Can you give some examples of crafts or folk art you've seen?
- What are some of the ways of learning a craft?
- Have you seen hand made crafts from Mexico before? Where?

MEXICO- Mexico is a colorful country inhabited for centuries by ancient civilizations. Since the arrival of the Spanish, the country has blended ancient rituals with European traditions. The present day country reflects the combination of those two influences.

- What are some examples of Mexican culture that you can identify?
- Even though we share a common border with Mexico, why do you think our countries are so different?
- In what ways has Mexican culture influenced our own?

MEXICAN VILLAGE LIFE- As you might know, much of Mexico is still rural with many cultural ties to its ancient past. The more isolated the village, the more traditional customs prevail. Agriculture, family and religion dominant activities in many small villages throughout Mexico.

- Can you locate Mexico on a map? The state of Jalisco?
- How does climate and terrain affect life in Mexico?
- How is village life in the United States different from Mexico?

MEXICAN PEOPLE- Up until the arrival of Europeans, the western hemisphere was inhabited by indigenous, cultures. Many great civilizations flourished in what is present day Mexico. The Aztec and Mayan people are the most well known. Our artists' ancestors lived in a region dominated by the Aztec culture.

- How far back can you trace your family?
- What are some Native American tribes in the United States? What Native American tribe lived in your area?
- Can you identify Native American contributions to our culture?

MULTICULTURALISM- This program is based on the exploration into the life and traditions of another culture. American society is made up of people from various cultural origins. The guest artists will also reveal that their cultural origins are equally diverse.

- Why is it important to learn about other cultures?
- Can you trace the cultural origins in your family?
- What might be some reasons for cultures to mix and influence each other?

VOCABULARY

artesanía- folk art, craft
alfarero- ceramic artist
horno- kiln
barro- clay
leña- firewood
pintura- paint
figura- figure
herramienta- tool
cuerpo- body
ojo- eye
boca- mouth
nariz- nose
mano- hand
pierna- leg
pie- foot
brazo- arm
dedo- finger, toe
comida- food
frijoles- beans
tortillas- ground corn patty
campo- field
campesino- field worker, farmer

maestro- teacher, master craftsman
alumno- student
pueblo- village, people
hijos- children in the same family
niño- child
muchacho- boy
muchacha- girl
toro- bull
casa- house
mesa- table
taller- workshop

Buenos días- Good morning
Buenas tardes- Good afternoon
Como está Usted?- How are you?
Que pasa?- What's happening?
De donde viene Usted?- Where are you from?
Hasta luego- Until then; later
Hasta la vista- See you later

BIBLIOGRAPHY

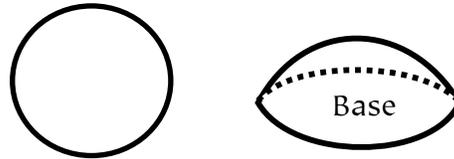
Oettinger, Marion Jr. The Folk Art of Latin America, New York.
Dutton Studio Books (Penguin Group). 1990

Sayer, Cloe. The Arts and Crafts of Mexico. San Francisco.
Chronicle Books. 1990



Candle Holder Workshop (Advanced)

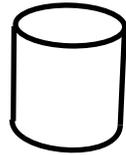
- 1) Begin by rolling a ball of clay 1½" dia.
Flatten the bottom to create a base. Set aside to dry.



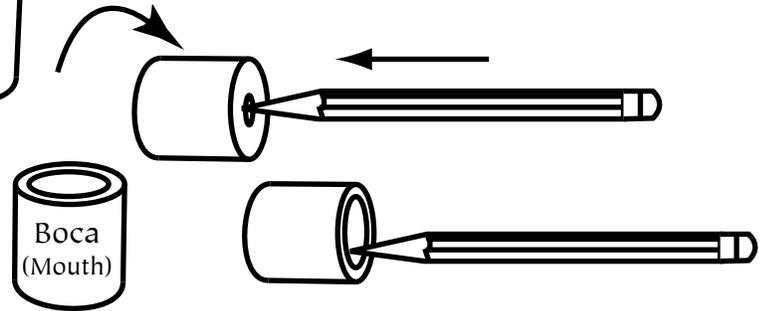
- 2) Roll a clay coil ½" thick and 5" long



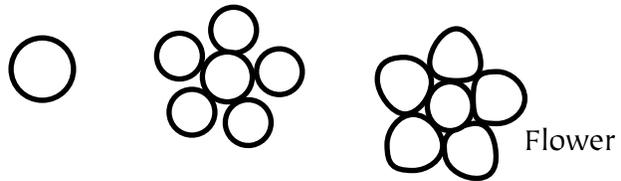
- 3) Roll a small coil 1" thick and 1¼" long.



- 4) Dip the point of a pencil in water and insert the point into one end of the coil. Roll the coil while inserting the pencil to flare out the clay (this will hold the candle). Set this aside with the base and stem.



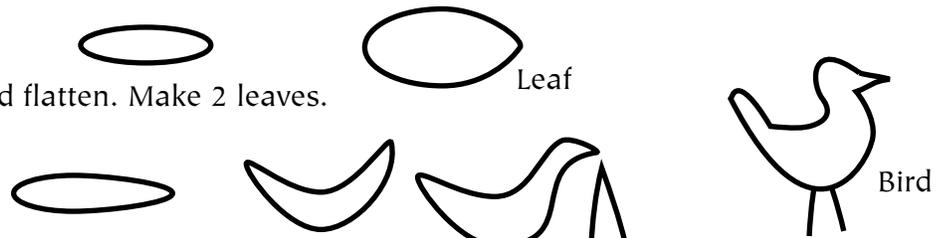
- 5) Roll out 6 balls of clay ⅜" dia.
Arrange 5 balls equally around 1 center ball. Sandwich the balls between 2 pieces of newspaper, and press evenly to flatten to make a flower. Smooth the edges to join petals. Make 2 flowers.



- 6) Roll out elliptical coil 1 ½" long.
Sandwich between newspaper and flatten. Make 2 leaves.



- 7) Roll out elliptical coil 1½" long.
Hold at both ends and make an S shape to form a bird.
Bend 20 gauge wire to make feet for birds and stick feet into bird. Make 3 birds.



- 8) Scoop out hole in base and attach stem to base (score both surfaces).
Attach boca to top of stem, smooth out.
Attach both leaves to stem (score both surfaces). Attach flower in front of leaves and on front of boca. Place birds on base

- 9) Roll out 2 balls ⅜" dia. and place on candle holder with wire.

