

## Las Posadas

**Las Posadas**, Spanish for "The Inns", is a religious festival celebrated in Mexico and some parts of Guatemala and the Southwestern United States December 16-24<sup>th</sup>.

Las Posadas commemorates the journey that Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a safe refuge where Mary could give birth to the baby Jesus. When they were unable to find lodging in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary were forced to seek shelter in a stable, where the Christ Child was born.



The celebration has been a tradition in Mexico for 400 years. Many Mexican holidays include reenactments of original events. During Las Posadas, a party is held each night in a neighborhood home. At dusk, guests gather outside the house. Families, especially children, dress as shepherds, angels and sometimes, Mary and Joseph. An angel leads the group, followed by Mary and Joseph or guests carrying their images.

The "pilgrims" sing a song asking for shelter, and the hosts sing a reply. When they finally open the doors, they offer hot "ponche", buñuelos, steaming hot tamales and other traditional foods. Once inside, everyone gathers to kneel around the Nativity scene to pray (typically, the Rosary). As the night ends, guests are given *aguinaldos* (small bags filled with treats and candies) for their celebratory "journey."

Latin American countries have continued to celebrate this holiday to this day, with very few changes to the tradition.

### Some popular foods served at Las Posadas are as follows:

**Romeritos:** A green leaf vegetable with small leaves, this plant resembles rosemary, for which it is named. They are most often served as *romeritos en revoltijo*, with shrimp cakes and doused in mole sauce.

**Bacalao:** Dried salted codfish, which starts showing up in markets and grocery stores throughout Mexico as Christmas approaches. This dish of European origin has become a common component of a traditional Mexican Christmas feast.

**Tamales:** Is a traditional Mexican dish made of masa or dough, which is steamed in a corn husk or banana leaf. The wrapping is discarded before eating. Tamales can be filled with meats, cheeses, fruits, vegetables, chilies. Both sweet and savory tamales are served on Las Posadas.

**Pozole:** a hominy soup made with pork or chicken and seasoned with chile and garlic.

**(Follow Up:** Try finding the book by Tomie dePaola, *The Night of Las Posadas* to read with the class or show a video clip demonstrating Las Posadas)