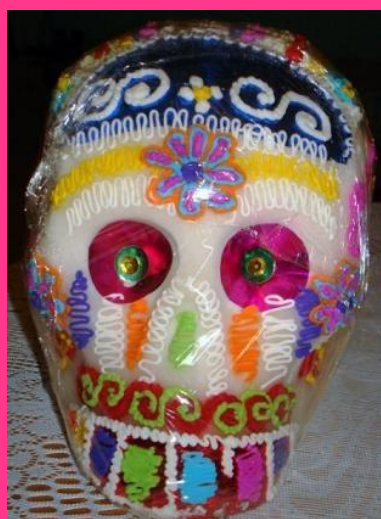


**Sugar skulls are a happy part of the festivities!**



**Giving a sugar skull to a loved one is like saying...May you live and long and happy life!**



## Day of the Dead Calaveras de Azucar



Sugar was introduced to Mexico 450 years ago through the Spaniards. Originally from New Guinea, sugar once known as "White Gold" has been a precious commodity for many centuries. Spaniards took advantage of the conditions and free labor through African slave trade. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they set up large sugar plantations and imported millions of slaves to perform hard labor. Unfortunately the start of sugar in Mexico has a sad beginning. Now it is used in the Day of the Dead celebration and many do not remember how it was started, it is important to remember the hardships and lives it took to get sugar into the Americas.

During the conquest of 1521 many changes took place in Mexico. As Catholic beliefs started to mix with Meso American beliefs a third culture was created. One of those changes is the Mexican Day of the Dead Sugar skulls. An important fact to remember is that traditionally only 2 states in Mexico celebrate Day of the Dead, Oaxaca and Michoacán. Many cultures not exclusive to Mexico have adopted the traditions of Day of the Dead in order to celebrate their loved ones who have passed away.

Giving a loved one a sugar skull is like saying, "May you live a long and happy life;" Similar to a Valentine on Valentine's Day. A colorful piece of foil is placed with frosting across the sugar skull and the name of the departed or living loved one is written in frosting. The making of sugar skulls is a long process of boiling sugar and placing it in molds. Much care is needed in making sure the consistency, texture and temperature is accurate to ensure the sugar skull solidifies correctly. The clay molds are passed down from generation to generation and are extremely valuable. Hundreds of sugar skulls are made by our families and other Mexican families during this time.