

How To Make **Sugar Skulls**

You don't have to be a child or even have children to enjoy this wonderful Mexican tradition. Making sugar skulls is just part of the Dias de Los Muertos (Days of the Dead) celebration. November 2nd is the day that loved ones return from the dead and are greeted with alters covered with foods, sugar skulls and other offerings. In Mexico, death is not the end but in fact the beginning of life.

The skulls are very easy to make. Just follow these simple instructions.

Materials

Sugar Skull Molds
Meringue Powder
Paste Food Coloring
Foil Sheets for Decoration

Ingredients (1 skull)

2 1/8 cups (452 g) granulated sugar
2 rounded teaspoons meringue powder
2+ teaspoons of water

1 step

Place the meringue powder and the sugar in a bowl large enough to allow you to mix the ingredients by hand and stir until well blended.

2 step Mixing

Add the water and mix with your fingers until all the sugar mixture is moistened. Once the mixture is about the texture of "moist beach sand" it is ready to mold. You may need a bit of extra water if so just add a few drops at a time.

3 step Pack the Molds

Once the sugar is moist pack it into the molds. Our large mold has 2 pieces so pack sugar into both sides. Make sure to pack the mold firmly, scrape the mold with a straight edge (use a ruler or the back of a straight kitchen spatula or knife), then pack again. Check the mold to make sure all the indentations are smoothly filled.

4 step Unmold Skull onto Drying Platform

Lay your cardboard on top of the skull mold and invert onto the platform as you would a cake layer on a plate.

5 step Remove the Mold

Gently lift the mold away from the sugar skull.
**Note: Hand wash the mold after every 5 skulls to prevent sticking.

6 step Allow Skulls To Dry

Your skulls should now be placed aside for about 8 hours or overnight. Now, if you are impatient like we were and you try to move the skull before it dries, it will fall apart. If this happens just place the sugar mixture back in the bowl, add additional moisture if needed and remold the skull.

7 step Hollow and Complete Drying

Once the skulls are dry enough to handle (at least 8 hours) then they can be hollowed out. Hold the skull carefully in your hand and scoop the insides out with a spoon until it is about 1/2" thick. Don't scoop around the neck area which is too narrow and may break. **Use the "scoopings" for making more skulls Allow the hollowed skulls to dry upside down on their platforms at least a full 12 hours.

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continued

step Assemble Skulls

When the skulls are completely dry dust them off and assemble. Make a batch of Royal Icing (recipe below).

Use an icing bag and pipe a 1/4" bead of icing around the back of one half of the skull then press the two sides of the skull together to fuse. Use your finger to smooth the icing over the seam. Set the skull aside to dry.

step Decorating

Once the seam dries you can decorate the skulls with colored royal icing, sequins, feathers, beads, earrings and colored foils.

Royal Icing

Royal icing makes a very strong, colorful icing and is frequently used for gingerbread houses. One 2 -LB batch of icing is enough for 5 - lbs. of sugar skulls (5 large skulls).

Ingredients

2 pounds powdered sugar
 1/2 cup meringue powder
 2/3 cup water
 paste food coloring

Mix sugar, meringue powder and water and beat using an electric stand mixer for about 9 minutes or until peaks form.

Place icing in disposable cups, mix with your choice of colors. Place about 1/4 cup colored frosting in a disposable icing bag fitted with metal decorative tip. Squeeze to decorate.

Left Over Materials

Moistened Sugar Mixture - Place in airtight containers and refrigerate up to 2 days.

Royal Icing - Store in an airtight container but do NOT refrigerate.

Sugar Skull Mold Yields				
Mold Size	# of skulls	Sugar (pounds)	Meringue Powder	Water tbsps
Large	10	10	1/2 cup	7
Medium	40	10	1/2 cup	7
Mini	200	10	1/2 cup	7
Large	5*	5	1/4 cup	3
Medium	20	5	1/4 cup	3
Mini	100	5	1/14 cup	3
Meringue Powder Conversion				
Weight	Cups (approx.)	Tbsp	Tbsp	
4oz. Jar	1	16	48	
8oz. Jar	2	32	96	
1 lb. Bag	4	64	192	
**Conversions for meringue powder are based on 21 teaspoons of powder = 1/2 cup (rather than the cooking standard).				