



## **Quinceañeras**

One of the most important celebrations in Mexican culture is the tradition of the quinceañera. This constitutes a ceremony on a girl's fifteenth birthday to mark her passage to womanhood, to give thanks to God for his blessings, and to present a young woman to the community. From an anglo perspective, the festival would seem a combination of a "sweet sixteen" birthday party combined with a coming out ball for debutantes.

In Mexican communities, the quinceañera serves not only to honor the young woman for her maturity, but also the girl's parents and family, as well as her padrinos or godparents. The godparents, and her mother and father play important roles throughout the ceremonies. Most societies have rituals signifying a passage to adulthood for both women and men, but the quinceañera is very distinctive. In former times, the girl's fifteenth birthday would have signaled that she was an active, adult member of the community, fully ready to take on her share of responsibilities, and indicated that she was of marriageable age and status. Today, the tradition has taken on other meanings, but remains a celebration of womanhood, family and community.

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