

Topic: Mexican American Christmas

Abstract: Growing up I lived in a house where there was a true clash of the cultures. My father is a Mexican man while my mother is a Caucasian woman. I guess you can say I got the best of both worlds growing up. Each holiday was celebrated differently but, Christmas was my favorite and I still talk about the differences until this day. Christmas Eve was celebrated at my aunts' house with my traditional Mexican family, while Christmas day was celebrated with my mom and her American traditions. I appreciate how both sides celebrate Christmas. This is my family and I love them.

Key Words: Mexican American, Celebrations, Traditions, Mom, Dad, Christmas, Christmas Eve, Differences, Mexican family, Caucasian family

Ethnic Designation: Mexican American

Cultural Category: Social Practice: Traditions

Clash of the Cultures

Growing up I lived in a house where there was a true clash of the cultures. My mother is a Caucasian American woman born in Ventura, California; while my father is a Mexican man from Zacatecas, Mexico. With that said, I' am a Mexican American. My parents raised me that way. There are even home videos of me when I was little of them asking me "What are you?" and I proudly respond with "Mexican American". They were and still are complete opposites. My mom even had to use a translation book or some kind of dictionary just to talk to my dad when they first started dating. Growing up I guess you can say I got the best of the both worlds. I got to see how my white side celebrated opposed to how my Mexican side celebrated the holidays. It was seriously like two different worlds. I can go on and on about the differences but

for now I just want to talk about how my two families (my dads' side vs. my moms' side) celebrated Christmas. My sister and I still laugh and talk about the differences till this day. It's just so funny how different they are. My moms' side of the family celebrates Christmas on Christmas day, while my dads' family celebrates on Christmas Eve. I always loved how there were back to back parties like that, and how I got presents on both days.

First off, I would like to talk about my dads' side of the family and how they celebrated; since their party always comes first anyways (Christmas Eve). My dads' family is a traditional Mexican family so they're crazy/funny. I have two uncles and four aunts who all have kids (my crazy cousins), so you could just imagine the mountains of presents under and around the tree. Yes, we are a big family. Christmas Eve has been great at my aunts these past years but when I was younger I remember it being a lot more fun. I guess that's how it is with all things in life. I miss when all my cousins and I would run around like wild animals while my aunts cooked and the men drank beer while eating and talking at the table. For some reason food was always ready for them, they were always getting served. The foods that you're going to find at this party are plates consisting of: mole, pozole, tamales, flan, rice, and all the other traditional Mexican foods and desserts. It's always so good. My mom's Caucasian so she doesn't really make Mexican food, so I'm in awe at my aunt's house. I definitely take some food to go! I love my aunts' tamales and orange rice. No one can make them like her. I remember one year they tried to get me to help make the tamales, I failed, I coated those leaves with too much masa. From then on I decided to leave the cooking to the pros (my aunts). So, everyone eats, laughs and tells stories. The parties use to go till midnight where we'd all wait to open our presents, but unfortunately now that we're older we usually eat, talk, and take our presents to go around 10:30 or 11:00. The elders will stay there till who knows when but the youth are gone (we all have our own cars now).

Writing this makes me sad because I see that the tradition is starting to fade away but, that's how I remember growing up going to my Mexican sides' Christmas celebration. Hopefully when my cousins and I start having our own kids we can bring back old traditions. All in all, it's always fun going to my aunt's house.

Now as for Christmas day I spend that day with my mom and her side of the family. My moms' side is smaller, so it's a lot calmer than my aunts' that I mentioned above. We usually wake up and open our presents first thing in the morning. After we open our presents my mom spends all day in the kitchen cooking. We don't do much just hangout. My brother and his wife will stop by for a bit too. When my grandparents were alive we'd go to my grandmas' house. I have one cousin on my moms' side; she's like my best friend. She and I would play around trying to irritate my mom and grandma while they would cook. It was fun, I miss those days. These days Christmas is at my house! Now I actually help my mom cook. I guess that's their tradition: mother and daughter cooking. My mom makes the traditional ham, mashed potatoes, gravy and of course rolls; obviously very opposite from what I was eating the night before. I often peel the potatoes so she can mash them. What a drag, but when it all comes together it's nice. She also has different types of pies for dessert like apple pie, pumpkin pie etc. While the hams cooking were all just hanging out together, watching TV, and talking. The house always feels really warm and homely on this day. I like that. The Christmas tree is always big, filling the house with a smell of pine. It's comforting to wake up to the mellowness of my moms' way of celebrating Christmas after all of the loudness from the night before at my dads' side. It's sweet. It's so mellow.

All in all, I appreciate how both sides of my family celebrate Christmas. I just wish my mom was more open into going to my aunts' house so she can learn how to cook some Mexican food!

(My parents are still married too) but she's a party pooper she doesn't go to my aunt's house. I think they're too much for her. It's pretty evident to see how they would be. They are such a blast while my moms' more calm and sentimental about the holiday. I don't know or even think this is how every "Mexican American" celebrates their Christmas but this is how my family does it and I love them.