

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

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Day of the Dead is a cultural pillar for Mexico's rituals of memory, conviviality and spirituality. The contagious joy of the vibrant decorations, foods and music that give this celebration its distinctive character transcends languages, borders and beliefs as around the world people identify this fiesta as one of Mexico's most joyous cultural export.

Since time immemorial, every culture and civilisation has dealt with death, mourning and memory in different and unique ways. After all, life and death are the indivisible binary force that rules our existence which is why they have captured mankind's imagination as we perpetually try to understand the limits of our existence and place in the universe. Immersing ourselves in Mexico's historical relationship with death opens up fascinating horizons of understanding how the intricate cultural and spiritual constructs around it are expressed through rich and complex traditions.
Mexico's **Día de Muertos** is the sum of collective grieving rituals through which communities summon the spirits of those who have died and welcome them with symbolic gifts to feed their souls and continue having a mystical relationship with them. This is one of the oldest and most complex traditions in Mexican culture, it is rooted in ancient pre-Columbian funerary rituals from which specific cults related to the worship of the dead took shape. After the Spanish conquest of the territory, Christian catholic traditions slowly became incorporated into the practices of the growing mestizo or mixed heritage society.



The tradition of Day of the Dead as we know and recognise today was shaped by the syncretism of these two cultures.

But what exactly is what Mexicans celebrate about death? To answer this, let's consider UNESCO's declaration of this tradition's inscription on the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2008. Día de Muertos commemorates the transitory return to earth of deceased relatives and loved ones. This period also marks the completion of the annual cycle of cultivation of corn, Mexico's most culturally significant food crop. Great care is taken with all aspects of the preparations, for it is believed that the dead are capable of bringing prosperity. This encounter between the living and the dead affirms the irreplaceable place of each individual within their society and contributes to reinforcing our identity as a mestizo culture by strengthening a sense of togetherness and spirituality.

It is an honour for me to share with you the cultural history of Día de Muertos, this tradition brings pride to us Mexicans and continues to inspire the world to learn and even be inspired to see life and death under a new light.



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CANDIED PUMPKIN
Calabaza en tacha

Timings

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cooking Time: 1 hour

Ingredients

- 1kg – 2.2lb pumpkin cut in large pieces
- 2 cinnamon sticks of 10 cm each
- 700g – 25 oz molasses
- 1 tbsp whole aniseed
- 600 ml – 20 fl oz water

Optional

- 3 guavas in quarters
- 2 large fig leaves

Instructions

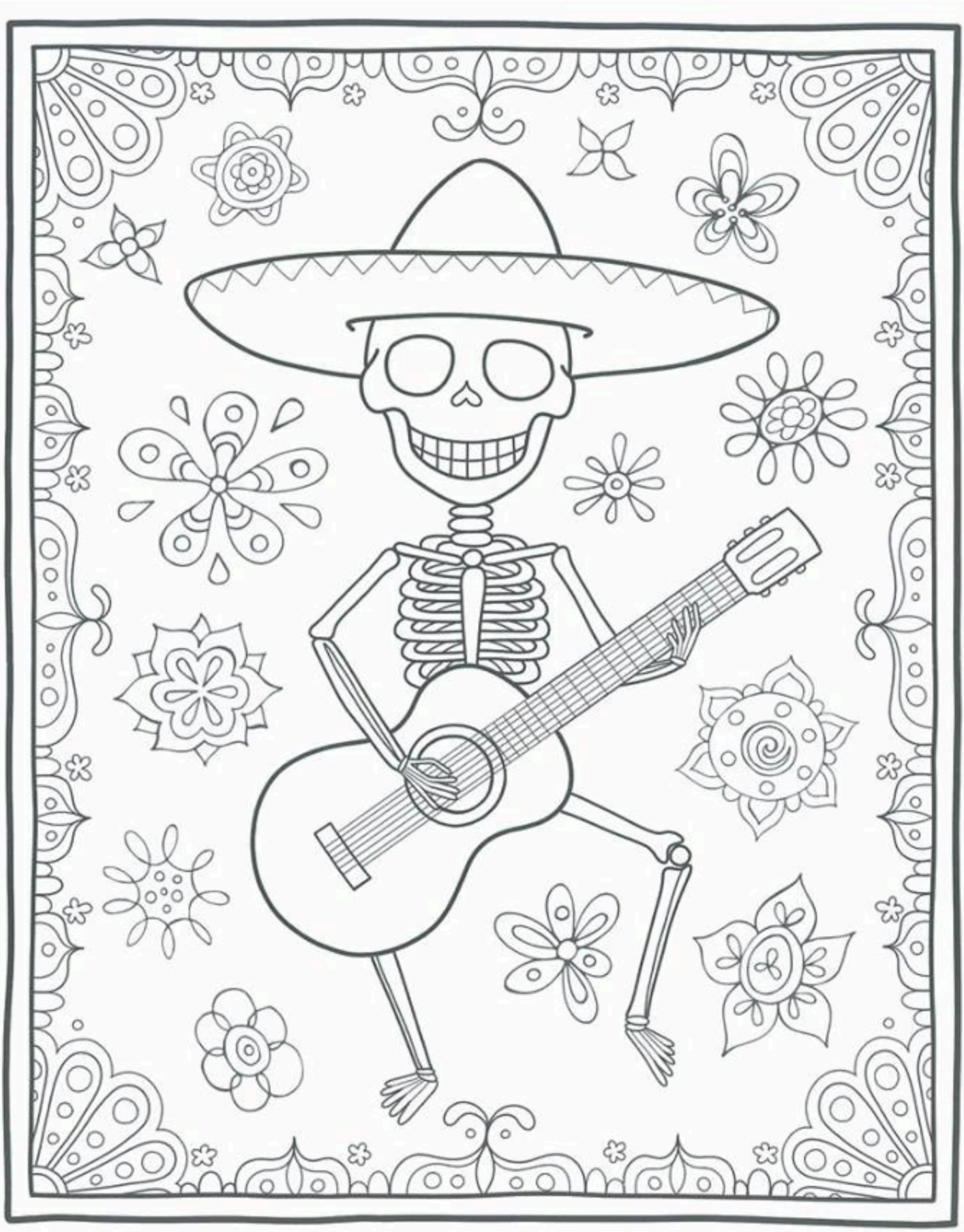
1. To prepare the syrup place the water, molasses, cinnamon and aniseed, in a large pot and simmer on a medium heat for 20 minutes. As the syrup turns darker and gains a thicker consistency the water will reduce to approximately 500 ml – 16.9 fl oz.

2. Next, add the pumpkin, and if you so wish, the guavas and fig leaves. This will infuse the pumpkin with a fruity flavour.

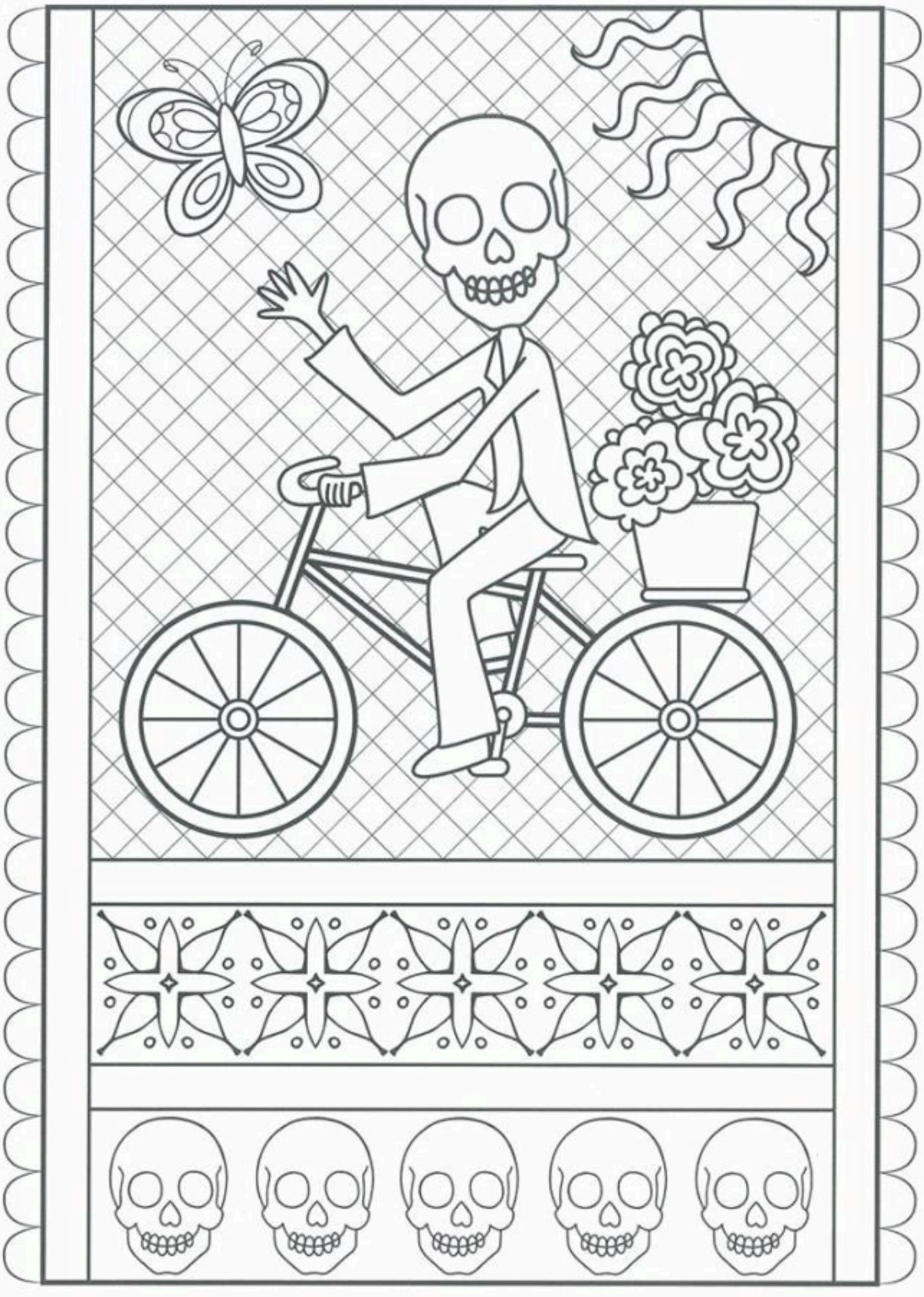
3. Cover and cook for 40 minutes on a medium-low heat. The liquids naturally contained in the pumpkin will be slowly released which is why you don't need to add any water. The pumpkin should go from bright orange to deep brown as it cooks and absorbs molasses syrup. To make sure the pumpkin is cooked, try to scoop a teaspoon of pulp. You should easily reach the skin and the pulp should be very soft and have a creamy and soft texture. If it needs more cooking just make sure it has enough liquid left, but don't add more than 1/4 cup at a time and if needed, add an extra tablespoon of molasses for every extra cup of water. It can be served hot or cold and keeps for a week in the fridge.








R.I.P.





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