

Quinceanera

GUIDE



The Perfect Quinceanera

A once-in-a-lifetime event, the quinceanera, offers girls the opportunity to throw an unforgettable party. With your parents, family members and friends ready to fulfill your every wish, take advantage.

The dancing, the food, the decorations and the overall jovial spirit are enough to make any young girl feel like a princess.

And although this “Sweet 15” is the first official birthday of a quinceanera’s journey into womanhood, it is important to find a great mix of youthful fun and classic traditions.

THE FOOD

No quinceanera would be quite right without a wide assortment of Hispanic-themed food and drinks. Traditional options can include enchiladas, tamales, rice and beans.

If your party is on the smaller side, you might enlist the help of family members and friends to do the cooking yourself.

Historically, quinces were celebrated in this fashion, but as invitation lists have grown and the party aspect of the celebration has evolved, many families turn to caterers to provide the fare.

Either way, choose options rooted in your culture to make your celebration as authentic as possible.

SEND YOUR GUESTS HOME HAPPY

Your guests will surely be in awe of your gown, decorations, music and fun that will accompany your special day. Many of them will give you special gifts to honor your new journey. Why not treat them back?

You can make sure they have tangible memories to take home with them by providing them with trinkets, flowers or party favors that represent your personality or heritage. Let them know that you appreciate their support and everything they have done for you over the first 15 years of your life.

START PRACTICING YOUR WALTZ

One sure way to fire up your quinceanera guests is to churn out a spot-on waltz. The elegant dance performed by the birthday girl and her court is one of the most fun parts of the celebration.

But impressing your guests won’t come easy. It is a dance that can take months of planning and rehearsals to get right, so start practicing early.

You can even hire a professional choreographer to help guide the party’s main dance.



Gown Trends

No part of the quinceanera has evolved more rapidly than the gown. Once kept all white with covered shoulders, the birthday girl now dons vibrant colors and sometimes chooses to ditch the traditional bolero.

Long white gowns resembling wedding dresses have been part of the tradition for many years.

The most important thing to remember is that it's your party and you have to be as comfortable as possible in your gown, no matter what type you choose.

You also should consider the thoughts and opinions of your elders when it comes to straps vs. strapless or color vs. white. Although this is certainly your day to celebrate, you will not want to disrespect your family's traditions on a day that marks your first step into a more mature state.

THE RIGHT FIT

When you walk into a boutique searching for that perfect dress, your decision should come down to your personal style and how the gown fits.

Compared to the wedding dress for its overall look, color and flowing pieces, the quince dress can be quite similar.

Careful measuring will help ensure you're not counting down the seconds to change into more comfortable clothes during your celebration.

Your dress should be fit like a dream, and it can if you make sure to take accurate measurements of your waist, hips and bust. Many dress companies have guides online that you can print and use when taking your initial measurements.

This can help give you a size to

start from when your local dress fitter asks you what you'd like to try on.

COLORED DRESSES

If done well, a colored dress can represent the present state of the quinceanera celebration without compromising reverence toward the traditional white style.

Some of the most popular dress choices produced by national dress-makers are actually bright red, pastel orange or striking blue. Tiffany dresses are some of the most popular options on the market and can start from around \$500. Consider how easy or difficult it will be to match your celebration's decorations with your dress or color scheme before settling on your final choice.

ACCESSORIES

No matter what color or design you choose, it's time to also start deciding which religious medal you will wear to express your faith and which ring you will wear to symbolize your spiritual responsibilities.

Mixing classic pieces passed down from generations with your modern dress will give you a timeless look that your friends and family members will remember for years to come.

Other traditions to incorporate include a crown and flowers, so while settling on a dress is surely important, don't forget the details.



For the Parents

To you, the years leading up to this day may have flown by. All of the good times — and challenges — have culminated in this moment.

And as your daughter officially undergoes her transition into womanhood, don't forget to slow down and celebrate your efforts, as well.

For the mother, this means treating yourself to a day of pampering alongside your daughter as you take it all in together. For the father, this can take the form of finding some relaxation for what will be a long, tear-jerking day of seeing your daughter as a woman for the first time.

DRESS STYLES

One thing is for sure about a quinceanera celebration: There will be plenty of pictures taken. That's why it's important to wear something in contrast to your daughter, to not take away from her special day or dress.

Be sure to talk through your dress choices with your daughter to make sure she's comfortable with your decision. She may decide to have you complement her dress color with a toned down version or to even match her color in a different style.

Whatever she chooses, it is important to respect her wishes while still playing the role of parent.

THE FIRST DANCE

As a father, one of the lasting memories you will have from your quinceanera's special day is celebrating the first dance together. You

have seen your baby girl grow up to this point and are excited about her future.

Let her know how proud you are by preparing something special to say to her during your dance. This can be a story or simply a message that describes how you are feeling at this time of her life. It also can be a perfect opportunity to let her know that now an adult, her responsibilities are to her family and her community, as well.

Whatever your message, make it genuine and sincere. Odds are, she'll remember the moment for the rest of her life.

OTHER RITUALS

Decide early on which rituals you would like to take part in. The most popular one — changing of your daughter's flats with heels — is a beautifully symbolic gesture that represents her growth into maturity.

Parents are oftentimes looked to for a special toast of their daughter. Depending on your personal comfort level, you can either prepare a written speech ahead of time or ad-lib one when the time comes.

Either way, it is customary to not only praise your little quinceanera for her newfound womanhood, but also share stories of her as a child. Mix in the right amount of humor and sentiment so you're not choking back tears the entire time.



Thanksgiving Mass

As many of the trends involved in the quinceanera have changed over the years, one facet remains the same.

The Thanksgiving Mass is still at the center of the Hispanic tradition in an effort to renew the quinceanera's baptismal vows and serving as the official presentation to her community as a young woman.

The Mass is comprised of many parts and culminates in the various signs of faith, such as a medal, Bible, rosary or prayer book being blessed and presented to the quince.

Some families choose to celebrate the quinceanera outside of Mass in a simpler manner. Many priests or deacons will offer special blessings in the church for the young woman, who can be accompanied by her parents and Godparents.

Whatever route you choose to take when it comes to the religious ceremony that will highlight your special day, it's important to understand the tradition as well as ways to get involved in the processions.

THE TRADITION

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the tribes of Meso-America celebrated elaborate rites of passage for young men

and women.

Some of these marked the passage of baptized adolescents through a Christian initiation that was celebrated following the reception of Holy Communion at Mass.

Many of these rituals then passed into popular religious practice and are still celebrated today as the pillars of the quinceanera.

GET INVOLVED

You can show your church and community that you are ready to handle the responsibilities of womanhood by getting involved in the planning for your special Mass.

If you're allowed to choose readings for the Mass ahead of time, consider doing so. You can ask a family member to read them or even choose to read them yourself.

Following Communion, you can follow the tradition of making a devotion to the Virgin Mary by presenting a flower or bouquet of flowers to the church's statue.

Taking these simple yet highly respected traditions seriously will prove your maturity and readiness for being an adult.



DIY Decorating

The average cost of a quinceanera is between \$15,000 and \$18,000, according to Quinceanera magazine.

One of the largest expenses can be in hiring a decorator to professionally deck out your venue.

That's why many families are choosing to handle the decorations themselves, saving big bucks in the process.

There are many online companies or even local gift shops that specialize in affordable quince decorations. For the thriftiest of the thrifty, you can even use your own creativity and materials to pull off amazing invitations, favors, crafts and centerpieces.

This can save you money and offer you the freedom of customizing your quince with no bounds.

DIY DECORATIONS

From the chair covers to tablecloths, you can fully customize a quinceanera — all without buying expensive, chic fabrics. Simply find some old sheets or scrap fabric and cut the material into long, horizontal pieces.

Different colored fabrics are best and will together form an assorted garland that can be strewn from the sides of tables or the tops of door-

ways.

Similarly, if you're looking to put together aesthetically pleasing flower centerpieces without shelling out the money for an expensive florist, why not think paper? Create your own paper bouquets or arrangements made from varying textures, colors and weights of paper.

COURT OF HONOR

Your decorating doesn't have to be limited to tables, chairs, streamers and flowers. Take it to the next level by incorporating your design into the wardrobe of the court of honor.

Traditionally made up of 14 girls and 14 boys, this group's attire can coordinate with the colors or styling of your party.

If pink will be highlighted in your dress or the dresses of your damas, be sure to outfit your chambelanes with handmade pocket squares or even shoelaces with the same color.

The little details are what will take your quinceanera from outstanding to out-of-this-world.



Hairstyles

Every princess deserves the perfect crown — and the perfect hair upon which to place it. When considering which style you will wear for your quinceanera, make sure it matches your dress and will stay in place.

Consult female family members who have experienced a quinceanera for their advice, as well as your hair stylist if you use one regularly.

FIND THE STYLE FOR YOU

Some of the most popular and traditional quince hairstyles are also the most basic. Styles like a simple bun or French twist can help any young woman look distinguished in an elegantly simple way.

Messier buns with curled ends can modernize a classic look but may only work for longer hair. If you have shorter hair, you can consider using natural hair extensions, which are gaining popularity for giving long princess-like looks. To make sure your extensions are properly affixed, you may consider hiring a professional for this task.

MATCH YOUR DRESS

When it comes to matching your hair with your dress, particularly a colored dress, be sure to incorporate colored hair accessories.

Additions such as ribbons, bows, clips or barrettes not only help keep your hair in place but add color and texture to your look, as well.

If your dress is covered with embellishments, your hair should be, too. Choose a style that is big on curls, gems, clips and other pieces that provide some shine. Keep it classy, though. You don't want to add too many items that could take the focus off of you and your dress.

THE TIARA

If you're adding a tiara to your hairstyle, one of the more modern ways of doing so is resting it atop your back bun instead of on the front of your head. Make sure your tiara matches the style of your necklace, earrings or other jewelry to tie the look together.

If you do decide to wear the tiara in a more traditional manner, consider going with an up-do that features your hair piled on top of your head so the tiara is both comfortable and the center of attention.



Quince Cakes

While delectable, traditional Hispanic food is the staple of any great quinceanera, the cake is not to be outdone.

Oftentimes the centerpiece of the celebration, the cake is generally comprised of some type of meringue or spongy texture. Cakes are created to be as elaborate as possible, with detailed designs painstakingly incorporated to perfection.

In other words, they are a true work of art. Yours should be no different.

The fancier the better when it comes to dressing up the perfect quince cake. Fondant bows can be folded down multiple layers, while edible buttons can add little touches to really set off the cake.

THINK BIG

A cake is more than its ingredients when it comes to a quinceanera. Whatever theme you decide to incorporate into your party should be reflected in your cake.

Some of the more traditional cake decorations are mini figurines lining a multi-layered cake, representing the court with the birthday girl on the top layer.

Having a masquerade theme? Add a fondant mask to the side of the cake. Do you have the vision of being a princess quince? You can have your cake look exactly like a colorful castle. The options really are endless and limited



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only by your own creativity.

THINK SMALL, TOO

Even if you're planning on displaying a giant quince cake

for your guests' enjoyment, you can honor the day's fashionista with a colorful bounty of tiny cupcakes. And not just average cupcakes. Think dressed-up treats with fancy

icing decorations and added features. You can add beautiful flower-shaped frosting patterns or find tiny tiaras as the perfect toppers.

Cupcakes are the perfect

serving size for your guests, while you and your court enjoy the main cake, and they don't have to be separate. Surround your larger cake with the cupcakes for a stunning display.