



# Cinco de Mayo

Cinco de Mayo, or the fifth of May, is a holiday that celebrates the Mexican Army's victory over France, at the Battle of Puebla. It is not Mexican Independence Day, a common misconception. It commemorates a single battle. While Cinco de Mayo is not considered a Federal holiday in Mexico, it is primarily observed in the city of Puebla, and the surrounding region, with an annual military reenactment and a parade that features mariachi music, colorful costumes, flamenco dancing, and fireworks. The date was first celebrated in the United States in Southern California (1863) as a show of solidarity with Mexico against French rule, and gained traction during the 1960s, when Chicano activists began looking for a way to honor their history and culture.<sup>3</sup>



The Battle of Puebla began at daybreak on May 5<sup>th</sup>. The French force of 6,000 troops, led by French General Charles de Lorencz, expected an easy win against the Mexican town of Puebla.<sup>5</sup> The overconfident, French army did not properly prepare their artillery and tried intimidation with bugle calls and bayonet maneuvers. Yet, after three unsuccessful uphill charges, they were forced to retreat due to heavy casualties.<sup>3</sup> You may be asking, what caused this war? Mexico had just gone through the War of Reform, leaving them broke and owing tens of millions of dollars to foreign countries. Newly elected President Juárez suspended payment of all foreign debt for two years, a move that prompted an immediate backlash from Spain, France and Great Britain. With the United States too consumed by the Civil War to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, troops from those three European powers began arriving in Veracruz in late 1861. Both Great Britain and Spain withdrew while France proceeded inland and arrived at Puebla on May 4, 1862.



There are multiple ways to honor Mexico's complex and vibrant culture, heritage, and cuisine. Take a moment to learn about organizations that work for immigrant rights and justice, or listen to some traditional Mexican music (ranchera, grupero, and Tejano).<sup>4</sup>

Sources: 1. <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/cinco-de-mayo>  
2. <https://www.pe.com/2021/04/24/news-why-celebrating-cinco-de-mayo-is-important/>  
3. <https://www.history.com/news/7-things-you-may-not-know-about-cinco-de-mayo>  
4. <https://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/archives/2018/05/04/how-to-celebrate-cinco-de-mayo>  
5. <https://nationaltoday.com/cinco-de-mayo/>