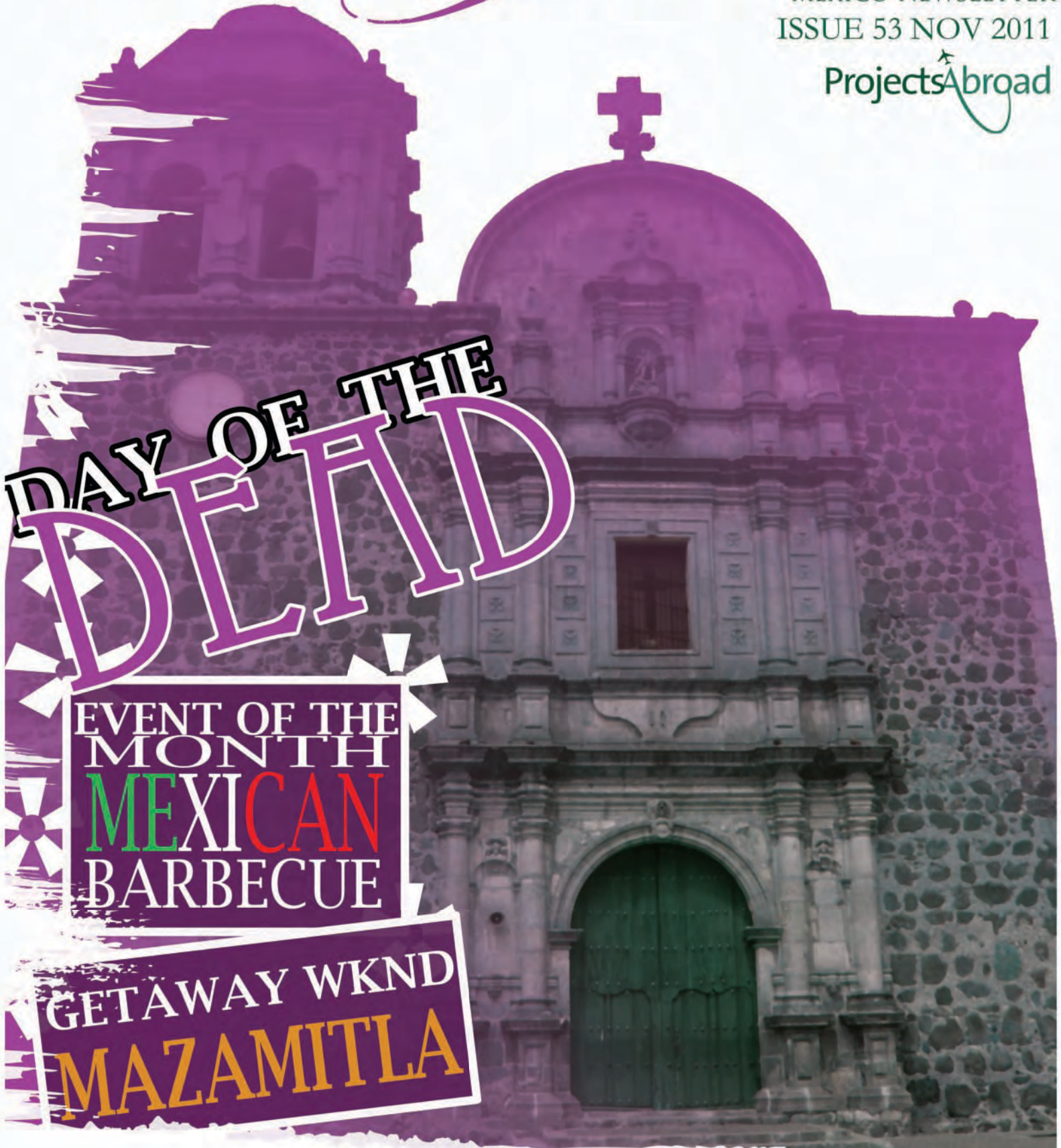


# SOL AZTECA

MEXICO NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE 53 NOV 2011

ProjectsAbroad



DAY OF THE  
DEAD

EVENT OF THE  
MONTH  
MEXICAN  
BARBECUE

GETAWAY WKND  
MAZAMITLA

# Editor's Notes

*A Word from the Editor  
Hello!*

*I want to let you know that we are already on Twitter! If you are a user then I invite you to follow us:*

*@Proj\_AbroadMEXI*

*I hope you enjoy our November edition!*

*Special thanks for this newsletter go to:*

*- Mariam Nanabawa for her  
Volunteer Story.*

*- Alejandro Soto for his collaboration on the  
mexican recipes section.*

*I also want to invite you to join our  
Facebook community where we share our  
pictures, happenings and news. The name  
of our network is:*

*Projects Abroad Mexico-The Official Group*

*We also encourage everyone to write their  
stories for us to publish in our newsletters.*

*If you want to write something about your  
current, past or future experience with us,  
please do not hesitate to send it along with  
your pictures to:*

*carlosochoa@projects-abroad.org*

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**Carlos Ochoa**

**Social Manager**

**Projects Abroad Mexico**

# Volunteer Story

## My experience as a volunteer

Upon landing in Guadalajara Airport I could not help wondering what I was doing all alone on the other side of the world. After an 11 hour flight it was easy for my mind to be completely irrational. These fears soon dissappeared as I was met by a friendly face holding a Projects Abroad sign and welcomed me warmly into a nice family, including another fellow volunteer. It was a whirlwind adventure from thereon.

During the month I spent in Guadalajara I worked within an Obstetric unit at the hospital Centro Medico. It is a large unit providing care for all the high risk patients of the city.

Even though I have been working as a midwife for the past 4 years, I felt like a fish out of water, almost like being a student all over again. This world of obstetrics was so different from the one I was used to. Pain relief was not available for patients in labour, unless they were having a caesarean section, fetal heartrates were checked hourly for women in labour whereas they are checked every 15 minutes in England, patients were all kept in one bay and were only given the privacy of their own room when ready to deliver and there was not enough equipment to monitor patients effectively so the most important case took priority. All of this I found frustrating but after questioning staff I learnt that this was all mainly due to a lack of funds and I began to understand the pressures they had to work within.

All the staff within the unit were kind, encouraging and extremely patient, especially when it came to my inability to structure a sentence in Spanish correctly. With their help I was able to understand their methods of working and was able to get involved in all aspects of patient care. I was able to take patients history (usually quite vague due to my poor Spanish), complete BP's, auscultate fetal hearts, venepuncture, cannulation, VE's and even deliver babies.

The month has passed so quickly and I have learnt so much about the Mexican healthcare system. I have great respect for all the staff who made me feel part of their team, even when it was really busy.

Living with a Mexican family has been great fun. They were always keen to help me with my Spanish (or should I say lack of Spanish), to understand Mexican culture and not to mention the constant supply of delicious food. I will never forget their kindness.

All in all I have had an amazing experience in Guadalajara, great weather, great food and most importantly great people. It is a worthwhile experience that I would most definitely recommend to anyone thinking about it.

**MARIAM NANABAWA**  
**Medical-October 2011**



# MONTHLY EVENT

## BARBECUE

So what exactly is a barbecue in Mexico? Well, barbecues are definitely one of our most typical traditions, or as we call them “Carne Asada”, and it basically consists of roasted meat tacos, guacamole, spicy sauce, beans, grilled scallions and quesadillas. It’s a great way to get started on Mexican culture, that’s why it was the perfect choice for our monthly event this November.



However, it’s not all about the food, it’s more about the whole process which starts with a journey to the meat market. Carnes asadas would normally revolve around 3 different kinds of meat; flank steak, skirt steak or pork sausage. It may sound easy and simple but it’s not at all, getting the perfect piece of meat and the perfect cut actually demands a bit of acknowledgment in the field, so you better choose your meat shop very well because the meat is the element that makes the whole carne asada. The second part in the operation is to get the right flour and corn tortillas,

scallions, avocados, beans, etc and last but not least, the ingredients to prepare the sauce, which would be green tomatoes, chiles and onion.

The ritual starts from the moment the charcoal is placed on the barbeque, the tables and chairs are cleaned, the meat is marinated, the sauce is prepared, the ingredients are chopped and all of the other preparations start to take place before everyone arrives. One of our volunteers, Mariam Nanabawa, who is leaving this week, decided to bring a farewell cake to thank everyone for her time here. It was a delicious cheesecake that made everyone’s evening just a bit sweeter!

Everybody was in a great mood; people were dancing and enjoying the tacos, talking, joking and helping turn this event into a success!



It’s was a great, warm Saturday afternoon accompanied by nice music, fantastic food and, most of all, the element which makes a great gathering; amazing people.

## DAY OF THE DEAD

Day of the Dead is a very traditional Mexican celebration. Although it has a bit of a dreary name, it happens to be the total opposite of what it may suggest, it's actually a celebration of life, positivism and good vibes. It's a tribute to all those who have already left us, to those who now walk on greener pastures; honoring our loved ones who now watch over us.

Day of the Dead is celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, a celebration that finds its roots all the way back in the pre-Hispanic era. The tribute idea revolves around building an altar with decorative personal items to remember that special someone who passed away, like his/her favorite drink or food, a picture, flowers and candles, all these dressed in radiant colors, accompanied by a funny/sarcastic poem commonly known as "Calavera" ("skulls"), mocking epitaphs of friends, sometimes describing interesting habits and attitudes or some funny anecdotes.



This custom originated in the 18th-19th Century, after a newspaper published a poem narrating a dream of a cemetery in the future, "and all of us were dead", proceeding to 'read' the tombstones. Newspapers dedicate *calaveras* to public figures, with cartoons of skeletons in the style of José Guadalupe Posada, a Mexican illustrator.

The Day of the Dead is a holiday celebrated mainly in Mexico and by people of Mexican heritage (and others) living in the United States and Canada. The holiday focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember friends and relatives who have died. The celebration occurs on 1st and 2nd November and traditions include building private altars honoring the deceased, using sugar skulls, marigolds, and the favorite foods and beverages of the departed, and visiting graves with these as gifts

The Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico can be traced back to the indigenous peoples such as the Olmec, Zapotec, Mixtec, Mexican, Aztec, Maya, P'urhépecha, and Totonac. Rituals celebrating the deaths of ancestors have been observed by these civilizations, perhaps for as long as 2500–3000 years.



*Calavera de la Catrina, by Posada*

## KARAOKE AND BIRTHDAY NIGHT!

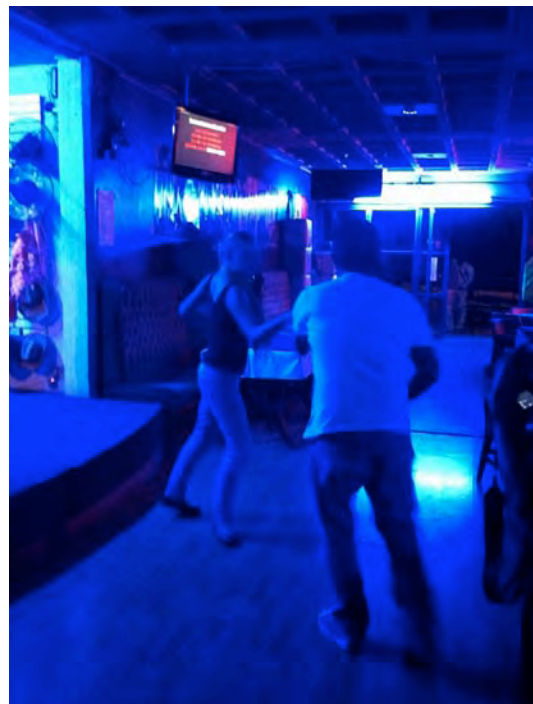
The best way to sing Happy Birthday? Quite obvious, at a karaoke place surrounded by your friends' not so out of tune voices! And last week we had the chance to celebrate Trine Friis's Birthday, and we did it by going out to a karaoke bar.

We had the place mostly to ourselves, just another 2 or 3 people there, so we easily took over the play list and started storming the stage like real rockstars!

The stage was quite small but had the typical props like the rock & roll cowboy hat or the crazy pink wig ala Lady GaGa style, accompanied by dimmed blue neon lights and rubber guitars to copycat your favorite superstar's moves.

It was a night of many great musical renditions by our volunteers and staff like Black Dog by Led Zepelin, Living On a Prayer by Bon Jovi, Dancing Queen by ABBA and the typical Mexican version of the famous Happy Birthday song being sang by the whole crew!

Once again, but this time here on our newsletter: Happy Birthday Trine!



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# Mexican Kitchen

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### FLAUTAS

#### Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 onion, finely diced
- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 (10 ounce) package corn tortillas (such as Ortega®)
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup salsa
- 24 toothpicks
- 2 cups vegetable oil for frying

#### Directions

1. Heat 1 teaspoon vegetable oil in a skillet over a medium heat. Stir in the bell pepper and onion; cook and stir until the onion has softened and turned translucent, about 5 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high and stir in the chicken breast. Cook and stir until the chicken breast is no longer pink in the center, about 10 minutes. Shred the chicken using two forks. Stir in the taco seasoning and water. Simmer until the liquid has evaporated, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Stir in the Cheddar cheese, then remove from heat and set aside.
2. Lightly brush each corn tortilla with a layer of salsa. Spread about 2 tablespoons of the chicken mixture in a line along the bottom edge of the tortilla. Tightly roll the tortilla into a cylinder, and secure the ends with one or two toothpicks. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
3. Heat 2 cups vegetable oil in a large skillet to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
4. Fry the flautas in the preheated oil, no more than 4 at a time, until golden and crisp, about 4 minutes. Drain the flautas on a paper towel-lined plate. Discard toothpicks and top finished flautas with remaining salsa.



## MEXICAN REVOLUTION

The Mexican Revolution started back in 1910, with a war led by famous revolutionary commander Francisco I. Madero against longtime dictator Porfirio Diaz.

Several socialist, liberal, anarchist and populist groups characterized the Mexican Revolution. Over time the Revolution changed from a rebellion against the customary order to a multi-sided civil war. This armed conflict is often categorized as the most important sociopolitical events in [Mexico](#) and one of the greatest turmoil's of the 20th Century.

Francisco I. Madero came from a wealthy family in the northern state of Coahuila and his plan was to run for president during the next election.

To ensure that Madero did not win the elections, Díaz had Madero imprisoned and then declared himself the winner. Madero soon escaped and fled for a short period of time to the United States.



But in 1910, Madero issued a "letter from jail" called Plan de San Luis Potosi, with its main slogan "free suffrage and no re-election."

It declared the Díaz regime illegal and called for a revolution against Díaz to overthrow the dictatorship, starting on November 20.

After prolonged struggles, its representatives produced the Mexican constitution of 1917. The Revolution is generally considered to have lasted until 1920, although Mexico continued to have outbreaks of warfare during the 1920s.

The Revolution triggered the creation of the National Revolutionary Party in 1929 (renamed the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, in 1946). Under a variety of leaders, the PRI held power until the recent general election of the year 2000.



## MAZAMITLA MAGICAL TOWN!

Surrounded by mountains, Mazamitla is a traditional, beautiful town.

Land of magic and mysteries that offer you one of the most amazing landscapes in Jalisco.



Thanks to its beauty and its nature, Mazamitla was proclaimed 'Magical Town'.

Some of the activities you can do there include cycling, climbing, horse riding and camping, among others.

In this area, there are also cabins which you can rent and have the comfort of your house in the forest.

Come and live Mazamitla!

