

Women and Altars, Nichos and Shrines – ¡Qué Viva la Morenita!

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Every year around the winter holidays, I am full of pride for my cultura. It is this season when I feel all the cultures that I carry within me more strongly. It could be because all the senses are awakened with the flavors of our wonderful food, the bright colors of the lights and decorations, the music of Las Posadas and all the diversity of our Indo-Hispano celebrations. There are so many rich and delicious traditions that we partake in this time of year, that even with all its consumerism, it is still a magical time of year.

In our family, the season kicks off with Our Lady of Guadalupe's Feast Day.



One of my earliest memories takes me back to my childhood in Nogales, Sonora and Arizona. It was the custom that many families on the Mexican side of the border erected shrines to Our Lady on their windows facing out to the street. My mom would drive us around the neighborhoods, so we could take a closer look at all the different ways the community honored Our Lady. Even from the distance, looking up at the Nogales hills, you could see the scores of windows illuminating Our Lady with multi-colored strings of lights.



As a Mexicana, I am a classic Guadalupana, and I venerate and honor Our Lady every day of

the year. Even as I ceased to call myself Catholic, I retained my devotion to La Morenita. I think it is precisely because she is called La Morenita that I have so much love for her. The legend says that she came here to give the indigenous people of the Americas comfort for their suffering. And I can so get behind that idea, that I hold it dear to my heart. There are other more cynical explanations, if you care to look, like that our Spanish ancestors made up the whole story in order to convert the indigenous people, but I choose to continue to hold her in very high esteem. Here's a great summary from the [Huffington Post](#) that you might find interesting.

A lovely custom that many Indo-Hispanos like us practice is to build or erect shrines, altars or nichos to Our Lady of Guadalupe. When I was raising Sada, we had annual Our Lady of Guadalupe parties and we would invite the children in our lives to make shrines. We collected small cardboard boxes, construction paper, old remnants of tissue paper and fabric, glitter and whatever else you could find in your craft drawer and have a party. There was a lovely woman in Santa Fe at the time, Connie Hernandez, who had a little religious shop where she sold old-fashioned devotional cards of various saints and milagros, and I would make my yearly run to Connie's to buy the estampitas to put in our shrines. The kids loved the activity, but it was always fun to see the adults wanting to take part in it too.

Here are some of Our Lady of Guadalupe shrines that we have in our home and some we made for this special occasion!







Comadres, if you have a shrine, nicho or altar to honor Our Lady, we would love to see it and

post it!

¡Felices Fiestas, Comadres!

¡Y que viva la Morenita!