

Why Do People Celebrate Cinco de Mayo?

By History Channel

Cinco de Mayo—or the fifth of May—is a holiday that celebrates the date of the Mexican army’s 1862 victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War (1861-1867). A relatively minor holiday in Mexico, in the United States Cinco de Mayo has evolved into a commemoration of Mexican culture and heritage, particularly in areas with large Mexican-American populations.

Benito Juárez

In 1861, Benito Juárez—a lawyer and member of the indigenous Zapotec tribe—was elected president of Mexico. At the time, the country was in financial ruin after years of internal strife, and the new president was forced to default on debt payments to European governments.

In response, France, Britain, and Spain sent naval forces to Veracruz, Mexico, demanding repayment. Britain and Spain negotiated with Mexico and withdrew their forces.

France, however, ruled by Napoleon III, decided to use the opportunity to carve an empire out of Mexican territory. Late in 1861, a well-armed French fleet stormed Veracruz, landing a large force of troops and driving President Juárez and his government into retreat.

The Battle of Puebla

Certain that success would come swiftly, six thousand French troops under General Charles Latrille de Lorencez set out to attack Puebla de Los Angeles, a small town in east central Mexico. From his new headquarters in the North, Juárez rounded up a ragtag force of two thousand loyal men—many of them either indigenous Mexicans or of mixed ancestry—and sent them to Puebla.

The vastly outnumbered and poorly supplied Mexicans, led by Texas-born General Ignacio Zaragoza, fortified the town and prepared for the French assault. On May 5, 1862, Lorencez gathered his army—supported by heavy artillery—before the city of Puebla and led an assault.

The battle lasted from daybreak to early evening, and when the French finally retreated,



they had lost nearly five hundred soldiers. Fewer than one hundred Mexicans had been killed in the clash.

Although not a major strategic win in the overall war against the French, Zaragoza’s success

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Federal Contracting: Veteran Small Business Certification Program Webinar
Tuesday, May 16, 2023, 12:00 pm–1:00 pm CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Jo Eckert, 319-362-6405, jo.eckert@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
Learn about SBA’s new Veteran Small Business Certification program. Certification has been transferred from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to SBA as of January 1, 2023. Certification with SBA allows service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) to compete for sole-source and set-aside federal contracts across the federal government. Certified veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) have additional opportunities to pursue sole-source and set-aside contracts at the Veterans Administration (VA) under the VA’s Vets First program. Register for this free webinar at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/veteran-small-business-certification-vetcert-program-tickets-619255007397>

8(a) Orientation and SAM Registration Webinar
Wednesday, May 17, 2023, 9:30 am–10:30 am CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: SBA Illinois District Office, 312-353-4528, illinois.do@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
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Selling to the Federal Government Webinar
Thursday, May 25, 2023, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm CDT Online
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Contact: George Tapia, 610-382-3086, george.tapia@sba.gov
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MAYOR MITCHELL J. LANDRIEU • CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

June 15, 2010

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CORPORATE OFFICE

1160 Battery Street East, Suite 100
San Francisco, California 94111
sbe@sbeinc.com • www.sbeinc.com

Tel 800-800-8534
Fax 415-778-6255
www.louisianabusinessjournal.com

Contact for more information: vvv@sbeinc.com
201 Saint Charles Avenue, Suite 2500
New Orleans, Louisiana 70170

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