

Despacho Ceremony

A *despacho* is a beautiful mandala-like offering made with symbolic ingredients to “feed” the Earth and Unseen Beings. Traditionally celebrated by our Andean brothers and sisters of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, the *despacho* ceremony is a ritual expression of love and gratitude. It is created on a piece of paper and folded up like a gift from the heart, then offered to a sacred fire, body of water or buried in the earth herself. We create *despachos* as a way to give *Ayni*—sacred reciprocity—for the life-giving energies we receive every day from the earth, elements and spirit realms. Every *despacho* ingredient is infused with our prayers of deep thanks and each creation is a unique embodiment of medicine beauty. *Despacho* ceremonies are performed to honor the changing seasons and moon cycles, any rite of passage, to ask for guidance and protection or to bless a sacred union or new beginning. The intentions behind a *despacho* ceremony are endless and the types of offering ingredients are infinite. What is most important is that we perform this ritual with reverent presence, playfulness and gratitude!

I. Supplies

- A. Florida water (or other perfumed water, wine or alcohol)
- B. Paper (newsprint, butcher or wrapping paper work well)
- C. String, yarn or ribbon (red is traditional)
- D. Cornmeal
- E. Loose tobacco
- F. Small scalloped shell (symbolic of the fertile and living womb of creation)
- G. Small amount of butter or any kind of animal fat (represents the richness of life that we offer to the Unseen Beings)
- H. Cross (can be cut from paper)
- I. 3 bay leaves
- J. Fresh flowers (red and white carnations are traditional)
- K. Despacho ingredients: Despacho “foods” are intended to feed Mother Earth (Pachamama) and the five Guardians of Ayni. In the Pachakuti Mesa Tradition there are five classes of these beings that are most closely connected to us as humans.
 1. *Tirakuna* - “The Watchers” live in rock outcroppings, deserts, forests and ceremonial sites. They feed on the energy of animal products, such as fat, feathers, fur, bones and jerky. The medicine from these offerings is physical health and manifestation and they are placed in the south direction of the *despacho*.
 2. *Awkikuna* - “Nature Spirits” live in moist marshes, meadows and fields. They feed on the energy of plant products, such as tobacco, corn meal, grains, beans and herbs. The medicine from these offerings is emotional health, relationships and magic and they are placed in the west direction of the *despacho*.
 3. *Malkikuna* - “Tree Spirits” live in ancient trees and represent the tree of life reaching far into the heavens and deep into the earth. They feed on the energy

- of mineral products, such as stones, sand, crystals, gem stones and ores. The medicine from these offerings is spiritual health and the ability to be a bridge between worlds, and they are placed in the north direction of the *despacho*.
4. *Machula Awlanchis* - "Benevolent Ancient Ones" were once human and live in the spirit world and in our memories. They feed on the energy of hand-made products, such as candy, beads, photos, poems and small craft items. The medicine from these offerings is mental health and wisdom and they are placed in the east direction of the *despacho*.
 5. *Apukuna* - "The Mountain Lords" are the spirits of great mountains. They are the first to hear the Will of Creator, and then pass this energy on to all life forms. They feed on the energies of incense and bay leaves. The medicine from these offerings is service, power, protection and blessing and they are placed in the center of the *despacho*.
 6. *Pachamama* - Mother Earth feeds on all that we offer in the *despacho*. The medicine from these offerings is life, healing and fertility.
 7. *Any ingredient can be used if offered prayerfully—you are limited only by your imagination.
 8. Examples of other ingredients to use are:
 - a) Sugar, candy, sprinkles for the sweetness of life
 - b) Incense for carrying prayers
 - c) Spices for the spice of life
 - d) Seeds for "planting" and growth
 - e) Raisins and other dried fruits for the *Machula Awlanchis*
 - f) Colored confetti for the celebration of life
 - g) Gold and silver foil representing the sun and moon
 - h) Beads or little stars representing the stars
 - i) Magnets, magnetite or pyrite to attract good fortune to us
 - j) Animal crackers to be in good relationship with the animals
 - k) Cotton representing the clouds
 - l) Rainbow ribbon or yarn representing the bridge between worlds and for tying together all offerings
 - m) Personally meaningful items including photos and small craft items

II. Ceremony

- A. Sprinkle a bit of florida water where you will be making your *despacho* and open the paper on top. Place another drop on the center of the paper.
- B. Make a circle with the cornmeal, starting in the south. (Represents the Divine Feminine).
- C. Make a cross on the inside of the cornmeal circle by sprinkling the tobacco from the top of the cornmeal circle down to the bottom of the circle and from the left edge of the circle to the right edge of the circle. (Represents the Divine Masculine).
- D. Place three bay leaves between the index and middle fingers of your left hand and offer three prayers—one for the earth, one for your community and one for yourself.
 1. Blow those prayers into the three bay leaves.

2. Pass them to the other participants if you are making the *despacho* with a group.
 3. Place the bay leaves in the center of the tobacco cross.
- E. Place the shell with the animal fat inside it on top of the bay leaves.
 - F. Put the cross on top of the animal fat.
 - G. Place the animal, plant, mineral and hand-made offerings in the South, West, North and East areas of the *despacho* respectively to honor the Guardians of Ayni. (The three bay leaves can be used as the offerings for the *Apukuna*.)
 - H. Create a beautiful and balanced mandala in any way you choose, made with any of the other offerings you have, infused with your prayers of love and gratitude.
 - I. Cover the mandala with fresh flowers and/or flower petals.
 - J. Offer a few drops of florida water to the *despacho*.
 - K. Ring a bell over the *despacho* and offer it your prayers or songs.
 - L. Gently fold the *despacho* like a present and tie it with the string or ribbon.
 - M. Burn, bury or offer the *despacho* to a body of water in a sacred manner.