

Aya Despacho

The aya despacho is one way to lovingly assist our cherished one to die consciously. The ceremony provides deep celebration for the life of the individual who is in the process of or has already departed and brings energetic closure. The intention of the despacho is to create a rainbow bridge between the worlds, to ease the process of crossing over.

The Despacho, which is similar to a mandala, is a traditional Andean ceremony that brings balance and right relationship. Using various ingredients, the Shaman and participants build a three dimensional design that is usually enclosed in a circle. As symbolic elements and prayers of gratitude are added, the Despacho comes alive with the energy of creation. There are several types of Despachos and ingredients vary, according to the purpose.

During an Aya (meaning death) Despacho ceremony, the Shaman works with the family and friends of the individual dying or already departed, encouraging them to share their prayers and reminiscences. Her favorite food is served, favorite jokes told, and tears flow freely. Any unfinished business or remaining heavy energy is represented symbolically in the Aya Despacho. This heavy energy becomes food to send the beloved on.

It is simple to create an Aya Despacho for your loved one:

For the despacho, you will use 7 different colors of paper. Several pieces of tissue paper works will. You are creating a rainbow of colors and layers.

- Begin with a large piece of black paper (This will be the “wrapping” for your offering. Think of it as a present).
- Fold the paper into thirds one way and then thirds the other way so you have 9 squares.
- Working within the center square you begin to layer the burnable objects that have been informed with your breath, so the energetic essence of your prayers is within each one.

Since you are creating a ceremony for a loved one who has died, the process is a bit more structured than with other Despachos. You will want to build separate layers to honor each of the worlds through which your loved one has traveled or will journey to in the future.

Main Contents and Their Meaning:

- A drop or two each of red and white wine – Offerings to the Earth and Heavens respectively
- Quintus – Typically in Peru they use 3 Cocoa leaves but you can utilize 3 small leaves from your native trees. We often use Bay leaves.
- Red and White Carnations – red for the earth and white for the mountains. Place a red and white carnation petal on top of the Quintu – the snow

- covered mountains reaching to the heavens on top of the Earth. You will inform each Qintu with your prayer as you work.
- Sugar – represents sweetness and love

Now create the following layers with the colored paper, your prayers and ingredients:

1. Begin with the black paper – This layer represents the Lower World, the unmanifest, and potential. Each element added is a symbol of the unmanifest.

- Place sugar in the four directions, using breath and intent.
- Place your first set of Qintus onto the paper.
- Add seeds (sacred coca seeds are used in Peru) and animal fat (fuel).
- Add representation of the masculine and feminine.

2. Add the red paper – To Represent the Pachamama or Earth. In gratitude to the Pachamama, add the following:

- Lots of chocolate – Like most of us, Pachamama LOVES chocolate.
- Candles (not white, as they are for the mountains)
- Red wine – to say thank you to Pachamama. Pass it around so that others may sprinkle it over the creation.
- Photo of person
- Sprinkles – to celebrate life
- Incense
- Herbs, such as sage
- Seeds

3. Next the green paper – Representing the present world of reality. In gratitude to this level of reality, add:

- Animal fat for fuel
- Fruit, raisins, dates – spirits of our ancestors, our blood lineage
- Alphabet noodles – language, our spoken words
- Garbanzos, peanuts – all food our mother provides, our nourishment
- Quinoa - sustenance
- Tables, little figures etc. – aspects of everyday life
- Dollar – money; abundance in the next place
- Magnet - to attract our prayers
- Seeds - of the earth
- Cinnamon stick - for the spices of the earth

4. Add the blue layer of paper – Representing the sky, clouds, sacred mountains. In gratitude, add:

- Sugar
- Clouds – cotton balls

- Silica – magnetic qualities
- White corn
- White beads – air spirits
- Angels
- White grains
- White feathers
- Feather – flight

5. Next the purple paper – This Represents the rainbow layer. This represents the colors of the chakras and the rainbow bridge that is used by the departed to cross over. In gratitude, add:

- Sea shell – container for the intent of the Despacho
- Inside the Shell – a figure that connects the human and the sacred. This matches the departed with his or her cosmic twin.
- Multicolored wool or Rainbow ribbons - to represent the rainbow bridge
- Flowers
- String – to surround the Despacho as a circle of life
- Confetti – joy
- Incense

6. Then the gold or yellow paper – Represents vision, alignment with destiny and becoming with the stars. Place a new layer of Qintus here and add:

- Copal-golden incense to carry our dreams
- Silver and Gold leaf – the knowledge of Spirit and of the mystery of the moon
- Gold and Silver Flutes – the music in our lives
- Starfish – as above, so below
- Seeds

7. This last layer of paper is white – Covering all layers. It is the layer of oneness/nothingness. There is really nothing to do here but honor it with your intention.

When you have placed all your items in the Despacho, the corners of the large paper are then folded over the contents so that they all overlap at the center. The Despacho is now a smaller square. The Despacho is tied, without flipping it over so all the prayers are sustained. Add one Quintu to the top for forgotten prayers.

The Aya Despacho is burned (for quick transformation) within a short time after completion. When the Despacho is placed into the fire, participants do not look towards the flames until after the offering has burnt. This symbolizes non-attachment to the outcome and release of all claim to that which was given away. It is also a way of honoring all those who "dine" on the offering and assist the loved one with their crossing.