

Cinco de Mayo Comes to Isla Vista Courtesy of IVRPD; Residents Reflect on Significance Yiu-On Li (he/him), IVRPD Intern

Isla Vista Recreation & Park District hosted the Cinco de Mayo Celebration on May 6 in Anisq'Oyo Park, offering two hundred free burritos, tissue paper flowers, and four bands. More than two hundred guests attended the event, the third in IVRPD's second-annual Spring Concert Series.

"I like the music because it reminds me of home," attendee Kristel Cerritos, a UC Santa Barbara (UCSB) first-year undeclared student, said. "And the food was really good."

Cinco de Mayo celebrates the outnumbered Mexican army's victory over France at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862, during the Second Franco-Mexican War. Though the victory did not significantly turn the tide of the war in either direction, for some it has come to represent pride in Mexican culture and heritage in the face of adversity.

"The actual day—the Mexican battle against the French—doesn't really matter that much to me; I don't particularly care," attendee Reemo Hooper, a UCSB first-year political science major, said. "But in my upbringing, it has had a decent role in terms of memories and things to do."

Audio entertainment consisted of Los Anclas, Los Lagers, a DJ set, a spoken word performance, and Mariachi Las Olas. Juan Zaragosa, the director of Mariachi Las Olas, shared Hooper's ambivalence about the holiday.

"It is significant as it is, but it wasn't really celebrated in my home," Zaragosa said. "In Santa Barbara County, outside of my home, it's more celebrated. And I acknowledge it. And, hey, keeps somebody actually busy."

Attendee Karla Esqueda, a UCSB second-year economics and accounting major, had a similar experience as Zaragosa did.

"Growing up in a Mexican household, we don't celebrate Cinco de Mayo," she said. "I wasn't really taught what it was or anything like that."

Zaragosa attributed this disparity between those who celebrate the holiday and those who don't to one thing: commercialization.

"With the alcoholic commercial sales, especially beer sales—now, there's a lot of hard liquor sales," he said. "It's kinda like more of a promotion for them."

According to Hooper, celebrations for Cinco de Mayo can arise simply because people learn about it in school and think they "ought to celebrate it."

"It's becoming more culturally relevant despite it not really having that much reason for being so," he said. "The Mexican battle means something, but it's definitely overblown in terms of how people see it now."

While Zaragosa did not think Cinco de Mayo was completely meaningless, he cautioned against putting too much stock in the holiday.

“There is a significance to the date. It’s one battle that was won against [France],” Zaragosa said. “One battle that was won—not a war.”