

# The Charreada: A Mexican Tradition

by Kerri Krueger | August 2008



Every year, Milwaukee's Mexican Fiesta is packed full of tradition, there's no doubt about that. This year is going to be a little different. An authentic Mexican charreada will be available for festival attendees. This is the very first time that Mexican Fiesta has seen anything like this, and it is bound to be a big hit!

## A Brief History

The charreada, a style of rodeo, was first brought to Mexico from Spain back in the 16th century. Small landowners were the first charros, and were the ones who invented the charreada. After the Mexican Revolution, the people of Mexico searched for a way to keep the tradition alive, and as a result, founded the Asociación Nacional de Charros in 1921 to do just that.

Around the same time, Mexican Americans were holding lackluster charreadas north of the border. To help establish prominence in America, the Federación Mexicana de Charrieria, established in 1933, began helping Mexican Americans organize official events north of the border. Over the years, these charreadas have gained notoriety through the United States, and as a result, the U.S. champion team now competes in the national championship held in Mexico every year.

## Events

The charreada is held in an area consisting of a lane leading to a circle that is 44 yards in diameter. Before the events take place, the participants ride into the arena on horseback, accompanied by a mariachi band and cheers from the crowd. There are ten scored events, nine for men and one for women. Two (or more on some occasions) teams compete against each other for state, regional and national championships. The winners do not receive money as a prize, because the charreada is considered to be an amateur sport, unlike the American rodeo. As a result, the winners are given such prizes as saddles and trailers for their accomplishments.

The ten events are as follows:

- Cala de Caballo (Test of the horse)
- Piales en Liazo (Roping of the feet)

- Colas en el Liazó (Arena bull tailing)
- Jinete de Toro (Bull riding)
- Teama en el Ruedo (Team of three)
- Jeneteo de Yegua (Bareback on a wild mare)
- Manganas a Pie (Roping on foot)
- Manganas a Caballo (Roping from horseback)
- El Paso de la Muerte (The pass of death)
- Escarmuza (Skirmish)

## Costumes

As is tradition, participants in a charreada wear specially made costumes. The costume is arguably the most beautiful part of the charreada. Male and female participants both wear extravagant costumes. The two vary, but not by much.

Men wear tightly fitted pants that are decorated with one or two rows of silver buttons. The shirts are long-sleeved and are made of heavy cotton and are usually worn tucked in. The hat, known as a sombrero, is heavily embroidered and is almost always worn with a hatband made of spun horsehair. Women also wear a sombrero, but instead of pants, they wear a long skirt decorated with sequins. Their shirts are almost always white and are also decorated with sequins. It is worn tucked in, and a rebozo is placed over the top. During these spectacular events, riders take their costumes and their sport very seriously.

For more information on the charreada at this year's Mexican Fiesta, please visit [www.mexicanfiesta.org](http://www.mexicanfiesta.org) or call (414) 383-7066.

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