- Place: Quibdó, Chocó
- Region: Pacific
- Date: September 3 to October 5, every year
- Duration: 32 days

The San Pacho Festivals last for twenty days and are an excellent example of syncretism between Catholicism and African religions.

In late September and early October, in the middle of the jungle crossed by the Atrato River, a large cultural event takes place in honor of the patron saint of the capital of Chocó: Saint Francis of Assisi.

The feasts are lovingly called the feasts of San Pacho, Pacho being the saint’s nickname. They last twenty days and constitute a true immaterial treasure and an excellent example of the sincretism between Catholicism and several African religions.

Beginning on the September 20, and during the following twenty days, Quibdó, the capital of the department, becomes a stage for a huge party. The *chocoanos* decorate the streets with flags, parades and costumed groups take over the Franciscan quarters of the city, and the statue of Saint Francis is taken on a tour all over the city.

History of the San Pacho Feast

The people of Quibdó have been celebrating these festivals as they are today since 1926, on the date of the hundredth anniversary of the city's patron saint, Francisco of Assisi.

The Fiesta de San Pacho has quite a long story behind it. It was celebrated for the first time on October 4, 1648, when a group of Franciscan missionaries arrived on the Colombian Pacific coast with an image of Saint Francis of Assisi and the goals of converting the Indians to Catholicism and searching for gold.

That year, the Franciscans organized a religious ceremony with boat processions headed by the image of the saint.

Modern celebrations began in 1926 on the 100th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, who was named patron saint of the city of Quibdó.

Present Day San Pacho Feasts

Today, true carnival elements are added to the sacred character of the feast. It takes place among parades, costumes, and dances to the rhythm of the *chirimía chocoana*. *Chirimía* is the generic name of the folk music of the department of Choco; it encompasses an impressive variety of rhythms played by clarinets, cymbals, several kinds of drums, and saxophones.

Activities of the Fiestas de San Pacho

El Arco This is a Mass that constitutes the inaugural event of the celebrations, after which a flag ceremony takes place as a symbol of the responsibility of organizing a good feast and giving a generous welcome to the visitors who come from many cities in Colombia. The Religious Procession It carries the image of Saint Francis all over the city until it reaches the cathedral, where a long ceremony is performed. The Costumes of the Franciscan Quarter A costume by the name of *caché* is very important in this feast. Its origin is found in Spanish religious theater, specifically in the sacramental autos. The costumes are manufactured by the residents of several quarters and represent African princesses or pay homage to food, television celebrities, etc. They are exhibited on figures seated on floats. The figures move and play out situations of the social or political life of *chocoanos* or Colombians in general. Sancocho de las siete carnes
The sancocho
is a stew whose typical version here is made with seven kinds of meat. It is cooked in most neighborhoods in huge pots for the delight of residents and visitors. After several days of eating *sancochos*
, drinking, and evening dancing, Quibdó wakes up in silence on October 4, the day of Saint Francis. The feasts end with an immense procession, again parading statues of the saint along the city streets. Music is turned off to give way to prayer. The inhabitants don Franciscan attire and give thanks to the saint for the blessings received during the party and in the course of their lives. This is why the feasts are known as “forty days of partying and one day of reflection”.

For further information, please visit the official website of the feasts .

What did you think of the San Pacho Feasts in Quibdó? Why not visit:

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