



{rokbox title=|Godchildren's Day and candy-trees in Cali|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/maceta01 .jpg{/rokbox}

Godchildren's Day and candy-trees in Cali./Photo. Bernardo Peña/

Since the end of the 19th century, Cali has been celebrated one of its most traditional annual festivals, Godchildren's Day. This is the occasion to give a one's godchild a candy-tree.

This sweet tradition is typical of [Valle del Cauca](#) , which has for hundreds of years excited the dreams and the imagination of children, who know all too well that the first days of May are when their godparents are going to give them candy-trees made in Cali.

### **Godfathers in Colombia**

In Colombia, godfathers are part of a deeply-rooted institution, since godfathers and godmothers both play and a very important role in the lives of children: they are their “guardian angels”.

### **The tradition of sugar in Cali**

The candy-tree is a tradition typical of Cali, and linked to the celebration of the children's day.

When the visitor arrives in Valle del Cauca, he can immediately see why the people of Cali are so sweet. The immense plantations of sugarcane cover the whole region, the air is heavy with the aroma of sugar, and the traditional cooking of Valle del Cauca revolves around sugar, for example:

- *Melao*, raw sugar syrup
- *Melcocha*, similar but crystallized
  
- *Cholao*, a desert made of ice, fruit, condensed milk, anilines, made in Jamundi.

This is why sugar runs through the veins of the people of Cali. (Also, some say, the bodies of women dancing salsa look very like sugarcane swaying in the wind.)

### The Origin of the candy-trees

The origins of the tradition are not very clear. There are two theories. Some scholars say that when sugarcane came to be part of the life of Valle, melao (raw sugar melted with a few drops of water) began to become an ingredient in the art of fine cooking, and that it was historically an Arab recipe. Others say that this white syrup was very popular among the slaves, who would make figures out of it, to express their experiences and feelings.



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Godchildren's Day and candy-trees in Cali. /Photo. Hilcías Salazar - [www.flickr.com/hilcias/](http://www.flickr.com/hilcias/)

### Candy-trees

Godchildren's day could not exist without the famous candy trees that godparents give their godchildren. The Spanish word for them, "Maceta " comes from the fact that it looks like "a branch which begins to flower". The core of the candy tree is a wooden pole, which is decorated with figures made in sugar: horses, fish, lions, clowns, birds and dolphins; and the whole assembly is decorated with colorful windmills and bows. Traditionally, these candy-trees were made up of traditional figures of animals or dolls, but today, there is a new trend to include cartoon characters in fashion among the children.

### Recipe: how to make up a candy-tree

The base of the candy-tree is a branch of Maguey mounted with figures made with the white sugar mass (alfeñique) and decorated with colorful paper bows and windmills.

#### Step 1

To make the traditional white sugar mass (*alfeñique*), put 5 cups of refined sugar into 3 cups of water, until it forms a syrup which has almost crystallized – *melcocha*

## Step 2

Let the *melcocha* crystals cool, then knead them until they become a solid white mass.

## Step 3

Make the white mass into figures like spirals or pineapples, mounting them on a thin stick.

## Step 4

Finally, set the candied-sticks into or onto the Maguey pole, fitting the windmills and bows around them.

Source: [Revista Acción](#)

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