

# Turning 15 in Style

Quinceañera gowns, such as this Princess Jasmine inspired design by Disney's Royal Ball collection, often feature delicate beading and large, full skirts



# From brightly colored gowns to over-the-top receptions, quinceañera girls and their families go all out for this birthday tradition

Written by Susan Perini and Kirsten Cornell



Andrea Carrizal chose a candyland theme for her reception

A quinceañera, traditionally known as a rite of passage for girls from childhood to womanhood, has roots in ancient Aztec society. Throughout the last few centuries, the quinceañera has changed, modernized, and adapted to new societal trends. Yet the celebration still maintains deep religious meaning and rich traditional symbolism.

In its origin, a quinceañera symbolized the moment a young woman was old enough to marry. Today, the celebration recognizes a young lady's 15th birthday and her entry into adulthood. Quinceañeras can range from a simple affair to an extravagant and lavish event.

## Religious Importance

A quinceañera has two main parts, a religious mass and a reception. The teens attend five classes as well as two years of religious preparation classes before they are able to participate in the Mass of Thanksgiving. Much like a wedding procession, the quince girl is escorted down the church aisle by her parents, followed by her attendants, and seated at the altar in a chair designated specifically for her.

The ceremony is written to directly relate to the celebrant, and the priest will often bless gifts for her to receive.

Lee Baltazar and her mother, Luchy Baltazar, celebrated her quinceañera in August 2012 and made the decision to emphasize the religious aspect of the event. But due to some scheduling issues, they had to improvise.

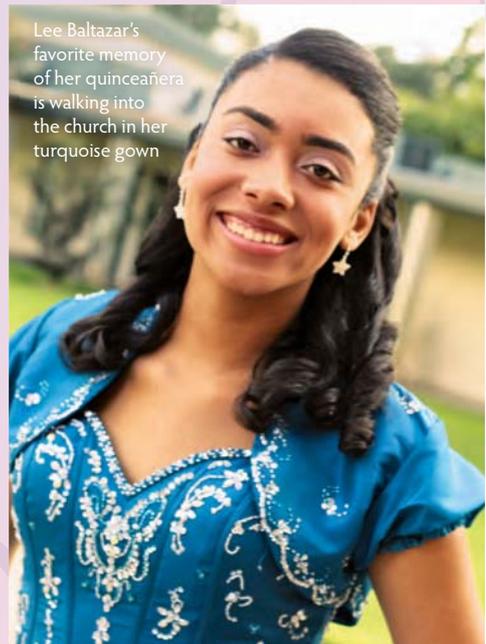
Instead of having a separate Mass of Thanksgiving, Lee went to the general assembly Mass on Sunday evening with all the members of the church. One of her treasured memories of the day is walking into church in her beautiful turquoise princess dress and seeing people stare at her in wonderment. When Mass was over, she went forward to see her priest for a special blessing.

After the Mass, Lee and her mother were approached by many other mothers and daughters wanting to know more about quinceañeras and what they were all about. "Being a witness to other girls made the day even more special," says Baltazar proudly.

## A Time to Remember

A celebration is not complete without a party – and quinceañeras are no exception. Planning for the reception can take six to 12 months and contains many of the same elements as a wedding reception. Families can spend upwards of \$20,000 for their daughter's special day.

Miguel Ventura is already planning a September 2014 quinceañera for his daughter Dianna. They have booked their reception hall and begun



Lee Baltazar's favorite memory of her quinceañera is walking into the church in her turquoise gown

other preparations. "I have seen other people wait too long, and then hurry to make their plans. They usually don't get to do everything they had originally hoped," she says. "I want to take our time, and do it right without the stress. I want to enjoy it all."

Themes run the gamut and aim to reflect the birthday girl's personality or special interests. For instance, a butterfly theme is popular in that it symbolizes her transition from a child to a woman and also has strong meaning in Spanish culture. Girls often wear a butterfly-shaped tiara and carry a scepter. Dresses for this theme can be adorned with beaded butterfly accents.

One of the most popular themes is the masquerade due to its sophisticated air and timeless elegance. The *quince* and her court don decorative masks coordinated with her chosen colors, which creates quite an effect during their traditional dance.

From the traditional white, to animal print and bold colors, *quince* dresses would make any red carpet star green with envy. Often full, princess style with many tiers and petticoats, the gowns can be show-stoppers all on their own. Other popular styles include high-low dresses, tea length, or sleek and simple.



Quinceañera processions include attendants much like a wedding celebration

When Karla Torres started to plan a quinceañera for her daughter, Andrea Carrizal, she was concerned that having only three months to plan might not be enough time. In the end, they had a beautiful, traditional Spanish quinceañera that came together with friends and family helping with the preparations.

Andrea worked her candyland theme into every aspect of her quinceañera from the candy table centerpieces to her eye-popping fuchsia dress, sewn by a cousin in Mexico.

### Tender Moments

One of the most sentimental moments of the reception is the father-daughter waltz. While she is celebrating her largest birthday to date, dad is remembering when he first held her in his arms, and now realizing that she is on her way to becoming an adult.

"My most treasured memory is dancing with my dad because he does so many things for me," says Andrea.

With a mixture of excitement, nervousness, and tender sadness, quinceañeras are a celebration of a young girl's life as she continues to mature and flourish. "It was really a special moment for us," says Karla. "It made us realize that she is no longer a baby. She's growing up." KM

SUSAN PERINI lives in Katy with her husband and three children.

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Photo courtesy of Disney



Pocahontas gown from Disney's Royal Ball collection

# A Guide to Quinceañera Planning

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[houstoniangolf.com](http://houstoniangolf.com)

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**Pine Forest Country Club**  
[pfcc.com](http://pfcc.com)

**Smith Ranch**  
[smithranchkaty.com](http://smithranchkaty.com)

**Tuscany Villa**  
[thetuscanyvilla.com](http://thetuscanyvilla.com)

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[westonlakes.net](http://westonlakes.net)

## DRESSES

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