

Andean Despachos

From a Peruvian tradition brought down from high in the Andean mountains, A despacho, which literally means "dispatch", is a ceremonial offering of our intentions and prayers. It is a powerful and lovely way to "dispatch" our prayers into the world. You can create a despacho or prayer packet to reflect any prayerful intention, such as healing prayers for someone, prayers for rain, or prayers for safe travels. Items are collected that represent your intentions such as a picture of a person you are praying for, leaves, soil, other elements of nature, or any items that symbolize something you relate to your intention. You can write your wishes or prayer on a piece of paper to include in your despachos if you'd like.

The despacho can be either buried (for slow, steady results), burned (for quicker transformation), or fed to the running waters ceremonially within a reasonable amount of time after it is prepared (please be considerate of the environment). When the despacho is placed into a fire, participants generally do not look towards the flames until after the offering has been burnt. This symbolizes non-attachment to the outcome and release of all claim to that which has been given away.



Note: you may find it helpful to Google images of "Andean Despachos"

How to create your own despacho:

Begin by preparing yourself mentally to become completely present and intentional. You may wish to light a candle or say a prayer.

Decide what prayers you wish to 'dispatch', and think about what things to include in your despacho which have meaning to you related to your prayer/intention.

A suggested list of contents, and their meaning is below, however, there really are no rules. Create your prayer packet in a way that is meaningful to you.

Begin your despacho with a piece of paper or fabric large enough to wrap all the contents of your offering. Think of it as a present.

Fold it into thirds one way and then thirds the other way so you have nine squares, then reopen your paper or cloth.

Working within the center square, you will begin to layer the objects. Before placing the objects on the paper or cloth, blow on the object so that the energetic essence of your prayers is within each one. During your assembly of the despacho, you may wish to arrange the items in an esthetically pleasing pattern such as a mandala. You can even lightly sprinkle the despacho with wine, perfume, or some other liquid that is meaningful to you.

Once you have filled the despacho with your prayers, fold the bundle into the shape of a gift; left to right, right to left; then bottom up and top down. Tie it with a cord, ribbon, yarn, strip of cloth or whatever you prefer. You might tuck a sprig of sage, a feather or some other item in the tie for added decoration or to symbolize a final prayer or blessing.

Ingredient suggestions and their representations:

- *Large piece of paper or cloth:* The envelope of dreams in which we “write” our prayers. Blow your prayer intent or intent for reciprocity and balance in to this empty, folded gift.
- *Sugar:* Represents sweetness and love.
- *K'intu:* A ritual grouping of leaves. In Peru, they typically use three coca leaves, but you can use three small leaves from native trees. Bay leaves are often used, so look for leaves about that size.
- *Build the foundation* of the despacho with the K'intus, informing each with your prayer
- *Cover the K'intus* with a little more sugar, representing even more love and sweetness.
- *Rice:* Fertility and abundance, to bring your prayers into fruition.
- *Various grains:* Sustenance.
- *Beans:* For protection, abundance, power places, and the springs that nourish us.
- *Corn:* Sustenance, gift back to the Earth for what we have been given.
- *Raisins:* Spirits of our ancestors, our blood lineage.
- *Animal crackers* for animal spirits, and health.
- *Chocolate:* more sweetness
- *Loose sage or other incense:* To feed the elements of the Earth.
- *Flower petals:* for healing.

When you have placed all your items in the despacho, the corners of the large paper or cloth are then folded over the contents so that they all overlap at the center to form a smaller square. Tie the despacho without flipping it over so that all the prayers are sustained.

