

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## The Art and Science of Talavera Pottery at Talavera de la Reyna, Cholula, Puebla, Mexico

**Talavera** is the name of the famous white glazed *handmade pottery* that is seen throughout [Puebla, Mexico](#), and to learn about the making of talavera, I visited [Talavera de la Reyna](#) to understand this fascinating art.

The making of talavera is steeped in history and is a painstaking, and time consuming process, however the result is well worth the effort. The Spaniards brought the technique of making talavera, a type of majolica earthenware, to the indigenous people of Puebla, who mastered this art. Highly acclaimed throughout the world, talavera remains an important part of Puebla's history, and is used as tiles on the façades of buildings, on the domes of churches, on the walls, floors, and sometimes even on the ceilings of homes, and is also used to create dishes, sinks, and other decorative pieces.



**Talavera de la Reyna**

Visiting the **Talavera de la Reyna** atelier in late October 2009, I learned about the making of the art in a step-by-step process that begins by adding equal parts of white and black clay, one type of clay gives strength and the other type gives it pliability, to a large machine where it is mixed with water; once mixed, the clay is submerged in water where it rests for 2 months.

After 2 months, the water is drained and the clay is left to dry in the sun for another 2 months. After this process is complete, the next step is stomping the clay, which the artisans do by using the heel of their shoes to soften the clay; the clay is now ready to use.

From Clay To Art: Now that the clay has been prepared, the artist will cut a piece of clay from the clay pile, and will then use a large, heavy rolling pin to roll out the clay to soften it. Once this process is complete, the artist will place the clay on a potter's wheel to create various pieces.

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### Debra Rolling the Clay

While I was at the atelier, I watched one of the artists who was creating bowls, however instead of using a smaller piece of clay and creating an individual bowl from a single piece of clay, he used a large piece of clay to create a bowl and when it reached the desired shape and size, he cut the bowl from the top of the clay using a piece of wire, and continued to make more bowls from the same piece of clay.



### Creating a Bowl

Once the pieces are created, they are then left to dry in the sun for 3 weeks, followed by firing in an 850° kiln for 8 hours. Once fired, an experienced artist dips the pieces in the special glaze to create a very smooth finish without flaws, and then the pieces are left to dry for 1 day.



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### First Firing

### Waiting to be Painted

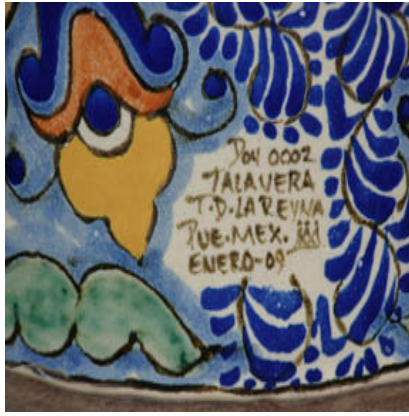
The next step is painting the pieces using the 6 traditional natural colors made from stones: cobalt, light blue, green, yellow, red, and black. To provide authenticity of Talavera, the artist who painted the piece will write the following information on the object: Talavera, name of the atelier, Puebla, Mexico, the date, and their signature or design mark.



### Artists Painting the Pieces

Once painted, the pieces receive another firing for 9 hours in a 1050° kiln. The process of making Talavera is definitely an art as well as a science that requires great skill as well as patience, however the result is a creation of lasting beauty.

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### Talavera Authenticity

**Talavera de la Reyna** is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 pm - 6:30 pm, and on Saturday from 8:30 am until 2:00 pm.



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For information on **Puebla, Mexico**, please visit the website: [www.VisitMexico.com](http://www.VisitMexico.com).



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