

A Christmas Piñata

by Lynn Handshy

One of the joys of this winter season is celebrating the myriad traditions brought to the United States from other cultures. A favorite of mine is the piñata.

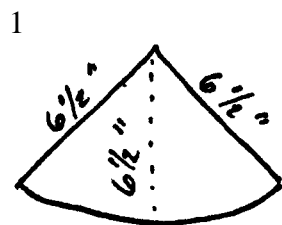
A particularly delightful book to read to K-5 children is *Poncho's Piñata* by Stephan Czernecki. The book was inspired by Diego Rivera's mural, *La Piñata and Procession* (1953). The story tells of a little boy who rescues a falling star caught on a cactus spine one Christmas Eve. Years later, Poncho decides to share the miracle of the Christmas Eve star with the children of his village by making a piñata in the shape the star and filling it with treats.

How could we possibly not make a piñata after reading this story in which Poncho demonstrates how to do it? Here's how:

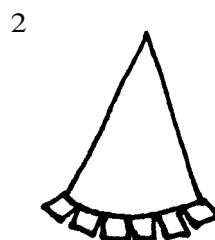
Make piñata base:

1. Blow up a 12-inch round balloon and tie the end.
2. Tear 1X6 inch strips of newsprint
3. Drag strips through liquid starch and then through fingers (scissors style) to remove excess. I do this over an aluminum turkey-roasting pan. It is messy but kids love it and the starch washes off easily.
4. Apply moist strips to the balloon evenly until the entire balloon is covered with about five layers of starched paper strips. Leave about a 2-inch opening near the balloon tie at the top of the piñata. Let dry. This may take several days.

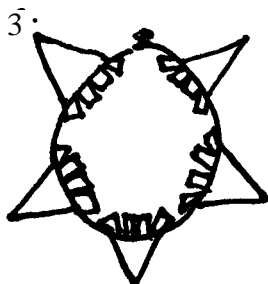
Make star points: See illustrations 1, 2, 3, and 4.-



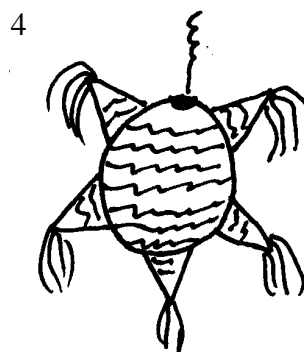
Cut five pieces of yellow construction paper to fold into cones



Snip tabs into the bottom of each cone and bend out so cones can be glued to the piñata.



Decorate the piñata when it is completely dry: Paint the piñata with colorful tempera or cover with fringed brightly colored tissue paper strips by gluing in a circular pattern, overlapping slightly from the bottom up.



Attach colorful tissue paper streamers (about 8 inches long) to the ends of each cone point.

The final step is to fill the piñata with treats and have a party to celebrate Poncho's story. Have fun, Lynn