



## TALAVERA STORY

Today's "True" Talavera tile and pottery is hand-formed from the rich black and white volcanic soils in and around Puebla, Mexico, where tradition and technique define this vivid craft. But Mexico hasn't always been Talavera's home. The history of Talavera spans centuries, cultures and continents.

### SPANISH ORIGINS

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the central Iberian town of Talavera de la Reina became so internationally renowned for its ceramics that it was called "La Ciudad de la Cerámica," or the "The City of Ceramics." The city's designs owe a lot to the international population that resided there, including Dutch and Arab settlers that contributed new techniques, tools and tastes that ultimately informed the Talavera style.

When the city of Puebla, Mexico was established in 1531—just a decade after the conquest of the Aztec Empire—the production of ceramic goods came naturally to its people, thanks to the abundance of quality clay and a long tradition of producing earthenware. The pre-hispanic cultures of Mexico did not, however, use a potter's wheel and were unfamiliar with tin-glazing. Both of these were introduced to them by Spaniards in the 16th century, transforming their methods of making, painting and glazing pottery with Talavera's now trademark milky white glaze.

The people of Puebla inherited their knowledge of the Talavera technique during construction of the Church of Santo Domingo, which began in 1571. According to many accounts, the Spanish monks called for craftsmen to cross the Atlantic Ocean from Talavera de la Reina so that their monastery and church could be decorated in the way they were accustomed—with hand-painted tiles and religious figures.

(The Santo Domingo was completed in 1611 and remains one of the most impressively ornate interiors in the world and a superb example of Mexican baroque.) Others say the Dominican friars themselves knew how to produce these tiles and taught locals. We don't precisely know how or why the Spanish craftsmen arrived in Puebla, but documents have verified their presence in the region. And they flourished there during the 16th century, establishing their workshops at a time when many churches and monasteries were being erected and their facades decorated with tile. Very much worthy of a visit, the Puebla region is now a beautiful riot of colonial era buildings covered in Talavera tiles.