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HALF MOON BAY ART & PUMPKIN FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 54 EPIC YEARS IN THE WORLD PUMPKIN CAPITAL

**California's legendary coastal celebration returns
October 17 and 18 with colossal pumpkins, 275 artists
and makers, the Great Pumpkin Parade, four stages of
entertainment, extraordinary pumpkin creations, harvest
inspired food and more**

HALF MOON BAY, CALIFORNIA — October 17–18, 2026 — For one spectacular October weekend, the picturesque seaside town of Half Moon Bay transforms into the undisputed center of the pumpkin universe as the **54th Annual Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival** returns to historic Main Street on **Saturday and Sunday, October 17 and 18, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.**

One of America's most iconic autumn celebrations, the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival is the signature event of the season in a community proudly known as the **World Pumpkin Capital**.

The experience begins long before visitors reach Main Street. The journey to Half Moon Bay winds through spectacular California coastal scenery where rolling farmland, weathered barns, pumpkin patches, fields of brilliant orange and sweeping Pacific Ocean views create a setting seemingly made for fall.

At the center of it all is a festival that has spent more than half a century celebrating the Coastside's agricultural roots, artistic spirit and close knit community.

This year's celebration brings together **275 of America's top artists and craftmakers, giant championship pumpkins, four stages of entertainment, street performers, harvest inspired food prepared by more than 20 community organizations, the legendary Great Pumpkin Parade, Farmer Mike's extraordinary giant pumpkin**

carvings, pumpkin pie eating contests, costume festivities, the 48th Annual Pumpkin Run, the Made on the Coast local artists showcase, commemorative festival wine and craft beer, family activities and an unmistakable abundance of pumpkins.

And before the festival gates even open, Half Moon Bay will spend an entire week building toward the big weekend with a series of signature events beginning October 10.

A WEEK OF PUMPKIN MANIA

In 2026, the celebration stretches well beyond festival weekend.

The festivities begin **Saturday, October 10**, with the debut of **Moonlight Movie Night**, a new annual community tradition at John L. Carter Memorial Park.

The following day brings a growers welcome and media preview before the world's elite giant pumpkin growers converge on Half Moon Bay on **Monday, October 12** for the **53rd Annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off**.

Five days later, the winning pumpkin takes its place of honor at the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival, where it becomes one of the stars of the Great Pumpkin Parade and one of the most photographed attractions of the weekend.

NEW: Moonlight Movie Night Featuring *Grow*

Saturday, October 10 | 6 p.m. | John L. Carter Memorial Park

Pumpkin season gets a new opening act in 2026 with Half Moon Bay's **first annual Moonlight Movie Night**, an evening designed to bring families, friends and neighbors together beneath the autumn sky.

The inaugural screening features **Grow**, a family comedy set in the world of competitive giant pumpkin growing. The film follows an unlikely young grower who discovers an extraordinary talent for raising giant pumpkins, entering a world filled with enormous gourds, colorful competitors and very big dreams.

The connection to Half Moon Bay comes full circle. When *Grow* reached theaters, audiences around the country were introduced to Half Moon Bay's legendary World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off before the film. Now the movie comes to the community that knows giant pumpkin competition better than almost anywhere.

Guests are invited to pick up dinner from a local restaurant, bring blankets to Carter Park and enjoy a picnic before the movie begins after sunset.

The event begins at **6 p.m. Saturday, October 10**, at **John L. Carter Memorial Park, 10 Stone Pine Road**.

THE SUPER BOWL OF WEIGH OFFS

53rd Annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off

Monday, October 12 | 7 a.m. | IDES Grounds, 735 Main Street

Before there can be a Pumpkin Festival champion, there must be a weigh off.

On Monday morning, October 12, some of the world's most accomplished giant pumpkin growers will roll their gargantuan gourds onto the IDES Grounds for the **53rd Annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off**, one of the world's premier heavyweight pumpkin competitions.

Forklifts, industrial scales and months of painstaking work converge in a spectacle where a few pounds can separate victory from defeat.

The stakes are enormous. The champion earns **\$9 per pound**, plus the Pumpkin King Champion Ring, the Mel Mello Sr. Grand Champion Growers Jacket, a stay at The Ritz Carlton, Half Moon Bay and a starring role in the Great Pumpkin Parade.

And if a grower establishes a **new world record**, a **\$30,000 total world record prize** awaits.

The number everyone will be watching is **2,749 pounds**.

That is the world record established in Half Moon Bay in 2023 by Minnesota grower Travis Gienger. The question for 2026 is irresistible: **can somebody finally push the great pumpkin frontier to 3,000 pounds?**

Last year's title went to **Brandon Dawson of Santa Rosa, California**, whose massive **2,346 pound pumpkin** captured the 2025 championship and earned \$21,114 for first place.

The 2026 competition begins at **7 a.m. Monday, October 12, at the IDES Grounds, 735 Main Street in Half Moon Bay**. Spectators are welcome.

THE GREAT PUMPKIN PARADE

Saturday, October 17 at Noon

Few sights say Half Moon Bay quite like a gigantic championship pumpkin making its triumphant journey up Main Street.

The beloved Great Pumpkin Parade steps off at noon Saturday, traveling north along historic Main Street from Miramontes Street to Mill Street.

Leading this year's procession as **Honorary Grand Marshal is San Francisco Giants legend and three time World Series Champion Sergio Romo**, one of the most beloved players from the Giants' unforgettable championship era. A fan favorite known for his devastating slider, electric personality and fearless presence on the mound, Romo helped San Francisco capture World Series titles in 2010, 2012 and 2014 and earned a National League All Star selection in 2013.

The newly crowned weigh off champion and the winning mega gourd also take a starring role in a procession filled with imaginative floats, marching bands, local organizations, dancers, performers, costumed characters, vintage vehicles and plenty of pumpkin inspired creativity.

For generations of Coastsides families, the parade has been one of the defining traditions of Pumpkin Festival weekend.

Spectators are encouraged to arrive early, as Main Street sidewalks fill quickly before the noon start.

40 YEARS OF FARMER MIKE

One of Pumpkin Festival's most enduring personalities marks an extraordinary milestone in 2026.

"Farmer Mike" Valladao celebrates his 40th year carving at the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival.

Wearing his trademark orange overalls and straw hat, the man affectionately known as the **"Picasso of Pumpkin Carvers"** has spent four decades turning enormous Atlantic Giant pumpkins into whimsical three dimensional works of art before the eyes of festival crowds.

Farmer Mike first stepped onto the Pumpkin Festival stage in 1986. Rather than carving the traditional triangle eyed jack o' lantern, he took advantage of the nearly five inch thick shell of a giant pumpkin to sculpt a dimensional laughing face.

A tradition was born.

Since then, hundreds of giant pumpkins have met Farmer Mike's knife, emerging as expressive faces, creatures, characters and elaborate relief sculptures. The pumpkins he works with can range from around 100 pounds to more than half a ton.

Visitors can watch Farmer Mike at work throughout Saturday and Sunday at his stage at **766 Main Street**.

GET YOUR PICTURE WITH A CHAMPION

Imagine standing next to a pumpkin weighing approximately one ton.

At the **Mavericks Community Foundation Giant Pumpkin Photo Booth**, visitors can do exactly that.

The winning pumpkin from the Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off becomes the ultimate festival photo opportunity at the corner of Main and Miramontes Streets.

Professional photos are instantly printed as **4x6 keepsakes for \$20**, with discounts available for multiple prints and poses.

Proceeds benefit the **Cabrillo Education Foundation**, supporting students in seven local Coastside public schools. The photo booth is made possible through support from the Mavericks Community Foundation.

275 ARTISTS AND CRAFTMAKERS TAKE OVER MAIN STREET

The "Art" in Art & Pumpkin Festival remains every bit as important as the pumpkin.

Historic Main Street becomes an enormous open air gallery as **275 artists and craftmakers** showcase original work spanning glass, ceramics, metal, fiber, leather, wood, jewelry, painting, photography and other fine art and contemporary craft disciplines.

Visitors can meet the artists, discover one of a kind pieces, get an early start on holiday shopping and find everything from functional handcrafted pieces to statement artwork.

Naturally, Half Moon Bay's favorite crop finds its way into the art as well, including the festival's highly sought after hand blown glass pumpkins.

Made on the Coast

On **Sunday, October 18**, the festival also celebrates the remarkable creative community of the San Mateo County Coastside with the **Made on the Coast Local Artists Block**.

The special one day showcase features local painters, photographers, potters, jewelers, fiber artists, glassblowers, furniture makers and other Coastside creators, along with artist demonstrations.

FOUR STAGES, STREET PERFORMERS AND A WEEKEND OF MUSIC

Music spills across downtown throughout the weekend with performances on the **IDES Grounds Main Stage, Ritz Carlton South Stage at Fernandez Park, Cunha's Country Stage at Mac Dutra Park and Safeway Community Stage**, plus street performers appearing throughout the festival.

The 2026 music lineup stretches across rock, folk, funk, blues, reggae, jazz and more.

Saturday, October 17

IDES Grounds Main Stage

9–10:30 a.m. | Jim Stevens & Friends

11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | Barn Owls

1–2:30 p.m. | Petty Rocks

3:30–5 p.m. | Sounds of Skynard

Ritz Carlton South Stage at Fernandez Park

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | Sonoma String Collective

1–2:30 p.m. | F.A.T. Betty

3–5 p.m. | Field Trip

Cunha's Country Stage at Mac Dutra Park

10:30 a.m.–Noon | Mike Annuzzi

Noon–1:30 p.m. | Stage dark for the Great Pumpkin Parade

1:30–3 p.m. | Half Moon Bay High School Marching Band

3–5 p.m. | Three On The Tree

Sunday, October 18

IDES Grounds Main Stage

9–10:30 a.m. | Jim Stevens & Friends

11 a.m.–1 p.m. | Jacob Benning Band

1:30–3 p.m. | Casa Del Sol

3:30–5 p.m. | Pete Floyd

Ritz Carlton South Stage at Fernandez Park

10:30 a.m.–Noon | Hey Jude

12:30–1:30 p.m. | Campfire Quartet

2–5 p.m. | Michelle Lambert

Cunha's Country Stage at Mac Dutra Park

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | Mini Flyer

1–3 p.m. | Southbound 101

3:30–5 p.m. | Tracorum

The **Safeway Community Stage**, located in the Bank of America parking lot at 620 Main Street, adds another full weekend of community based entertainment and emerging local talent. Its 2026 schedule will be announced separately.

COME HUNGRY: MORE THAN 20 LOCAL NONPROFITS SERVE THE FEAST

Pumpkin Festival food comes with an important local ingredient: community.

More than **20 nonprofit organizations** prepare and serve food during the festival, turning the weekend into a major annual fundraising opportunity for Coastside schools, service organizations, churches, youth groups and community programs.

The menu celebrates Half Moon Bay's agricultural heritage while delivering the kind of indulgent festival food people wait all year to enjoy.

Pumpkin takes center stage with favorites including **pumpkin pie, pumpkin milkshakes, pumpkin ice cream, pumpkin rolls, pumpkin cheesecake, pumpkin spice churros and pumpkin ravioli.**

Beyond the great and almighty gourd, visitors can dig into **clam chowder in sourdough bread bowls, grilled corn, burgers, garlic fries, tamales, mac and cheese, Spam musubi, sausage sandwiches, hot beef sandwiches, kettle corn, açai bowls, Brussels sprouts, artichokes, green beans** and much more.

RAISE A GLASS TO FALL

Pumpkin Festival offers a full lineup of wine, craft beer, hard cider, seltzer and nonalcoholic selections, served in collectible festival glassware.

Half Moon Bay Winery returns as the festival's Official Wine Sponsor with a special **Pumpkin Festival label 2025 Monterey Rosé of Grenache**. Wine is available by the glass at festival wine booths, while commemorative bottles are available to take home from the Pumpkin Festival merchandise booth.

The beverage lineup also includes Half Moon Bay Brewing Company's seasonal **Pumpkin Harvest Ale**, along with selections including Stella Artois, Golden Road Mango Cart Ale, Kona Big Wave, Ace Pumpkin Hard Cider and Happy Dad Hard Seltzer.

Harvest Moon Lounge

The **Harvest Moon Lounge presented by Half Moon Bay Winery** offers a place to slow down and savor the atmosphere at Kelly Avenue and Main Street.

Comfortable seating, nearby live music and easy access to wine make the lounge a relaxed gathering place in the heart of the festival.

OLD FASHIONED PUMPKIN FUN

For all its international attention and gigantic attractions, Pumpkin Festival has never lost its old fashioned community spirit.

Among the weekend traditions:

Pumpkin Pie Eating Contests take place both days in the Family Fun Zone at the Bank of America parking lot. Ages 11 and younger compete at **2 p.m.**, followed by ages 12 and older at **2:15 p.m.**

Pumpkin Carving for Fun takes place Sunday from **10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** in the Family Fun Zone. Pumpkins and carving tools are provided. There is no competition and no judging, just the simple pleasure of creating a jack o' lantern.

The **Costume Contest** begins Saturday at **10 a.m.** at the Half Moon Bay Library at Church and Correas Streets, perfectly timed for participants to join the festive atmosphere before the Great Pumpkin Parade.

START THE MORNING WITH PUMPKIN PANCAKES

The weekend starts early with the traditional **Pancake Breakfast**, beginning at **7 a.m. Saturday and Sunday** in the City Hall parking lot at Main Street and Kelly Avenue.

It is a classic Pumpkin Festival morning ritual and the perfect fuel before a full day exploring Main Street.

48TH ANNUAL HALF MOON BAY PUMPKIN RUN

Before Sunday's festival gets underway, runners take to the streets and scenic Coastal Trail for the **48th Annual Pumpkin Run by Senior Coastsiders**.

The Sunday, October 18 event includes a **Kids Fun Run, 5K, 10K and Half Marathon**, with various start times beginning in the morning.

The course showcases one of the things that makes Half Moon Bay unlike virtually any other autumn festival destination: the Pacific Ocean.

The race starts and finishes at **Hatch Elementary School, 490 Miramontes Avenue**, and proceeds benefit Senior Coastsiders, which provides programs and resources supporting older adults on the Coastsides.

A FESTIVAL WITH A PURPOSE

Behind the pumpkins, art, food and fun is a festival with deep community roots.

The Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival was created by the **Half Moon Bay Beautification Committee in 1971**. What began as a local celebration has grown into an internationally recognized autumn tradition while remaining fundamentally connected to the community that created it.

The Half Moon Bay Beautification Committee is an all volunteer organization dedicated to preserving and beautifying historic Main Street, supporting local nonprofit organizations, funding scholarships for local high school students and creating fundraising opportunities for community groups through the festival.

Over more than five decades, proceeds associated with the festival have generated millions of dollars for local civic projects, nonprofit organizations and community causes.

That community benefit remains at the heart of the event.

GETTING TO THE WORLD PUMPKIN CAPITAL

Half Moon Bay is located on California's spectacular San Mateo County coast, approximately **25 miles south of San Francisco and 45 miles north of Santa Cruz.**

Visitors approaching from San Francisco and the Peninsula can reach Half Moon Bay via Highway 1 or Highway 92. From the south, Highway 1 offers a spectacular coastal approach, while Highway 84 through Woodside and La Honda provides a scenic drive through the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Heavy traffic is expected during festival weekend, particularly on Highway 92. Visitors are strongly encouraged to **arrive early, consider public transportation and allow extra travel time.**

SamTrans provides public transportation to Half Moon Bay.

Bicycle and stroller parking is available at **Kelly Avenue and Purissima Street** for a suggested \$5 donation.

Visitors should note that **pets should remain at home**, with the exception of leashed service dogs. Large crowds, food service and potentially warm autumn weather can create a stressful and unsafe environment for animals.

2026 QUICK FACTS

Event: 54th Annual Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival

Dates: Saturday and Sunday, October 17–18, 2026

Hours: 9 a.m.–5 p.m. both days

Location: Historic Main Street, Half Moon Bay, California

Admission: Free

Great Pumpkin Parade: Saturday, October 17 at noon

Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off: Monday, October 12 at 7 a.m., IDES Grounds, 735 Main Street

Moonlight Movie Night: Saturday, October 10 at 6 p.m., John L. Carter Memorial Park

Pumpkin Run: Sunday, October 18

Art: 275 juried artists and craftmakers plus the Sunday Made on the Coast local artists showcase

Entertainment: Four stages plus street performers throughout the festival

Food: More than 20 local nonprofit organizations serving festival favorites and harvest inspired specialties

Admission: Free

Website: hmbpumpkinfest.com

ABOUT THE HALF MOON BAY ART & PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Founded in 1971 and presented by the Half Moon Bay Beautification Committee as a community benefit, the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival is one of America's most celebrated autumn events. Held annually in the World Pumpkin Capital of Half Moon Bay, California, the festival celebrates the region's agricultural heritage, arts community and unmistakable coastal character through giant pumpkins, fine art and craft, live entertainment, food, family traditions and community participation.

The 54th Annual Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival takes place **October 17 and 18, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on historic Main Street in Half Moon Bay. Admission is free.**