



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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25th Annual El Día de los Muertos at Cheekwood

Festival Brings Traditions of Mexico and Latin America to Nashville

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – El Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, returns to Cheekwood Estate & Gardens with the sights, sounds and flavors of the Latin American holiday when families celebrate the souls of deceased relatives.

During this special 25th annual event, guests can learn about the culture of Mexico and Latin America while visiting community altars, viewing large-scale murals created by area middle and high school students, sampling authentic cuisine from local restaurants and bakers, shopping for traditional goods, enjoying hands-on activities for kids, and experiencing a variety of dance and musical performances.

El Día de los Muertos at Cheekwood will be held November 2 and 3 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Day of the Dead is one of the most important celebrations in Mexico and Latin America and demonstrates the culture’s strong sense of love and respect for ancestors while celebrating the continuance of life.

Cheekwood’s celebration started in 2000, in recognition of the growing Hispanic community in Nashville. The first festival featured just five hours of programming, but quickly grew in popularity through the years. The hours were eventually extended, and more performers and vendors were added to become the much-loved two-day festival it is today.

Throughout the 25-year history of the event, Cheekwood has collaborated with an Advisory Committee featuring members of the Hispanic community to ensure the event is respectful and authentic. In 2023, Cheekwood was recognized for its contributions to the Hispanic community and received the Bridges in Art, Culture & Community Service Award from the Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

“Day of the Dead at Cheekwood is a celebration in which you can learn, appreciate and experience the ways Mexican culture involves family and friends welcoming back the souls of their ancestors and loved ones who passed away,” said Arcelia Vázquez, a member of the Advisory Committee for Cheekwood's El Día de Los Muertos celebration. “It’s about the things you can’t see, like love, loss and keeping loved ones alive through

memories. We hope Nashville will come and participate in this magical experience with us.”

Altars

One of the most important aspects of El Día de los Muertos is the creation of a memorial altar for the departed, known as an *ofrenda*. Across Mexico and beyond, families honor their ancestors by creating altars decorated with items that the deceased enjoyed in life. Guests can learn more about this tradition as they tour the creative *ofrendas* inside Massey Auditorium designed by local groups and organizations.

Entertainment

Saturday, November 2 | Frist Learning Center Courtyard and Terrace

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Dance Performance by Danza Azteca Guadalupeana
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Dance Performance by Raices de mi Tierra
12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Dance Performance by Folklore Iyali
1:00 p.m. – Fashion Show Featuring Catrinas Nashville
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Dance Performance by Mi Cielito Lindo
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. – Dance Performance by Danza Azteca Guadalupeana

Saturday, November 2 | Main Stage on Arboretum Lawn

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Musical Performance by Arrasadora Banda Tenaz
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Musical Performance by Rachel Rodriguez

Sunday, November 3 | Frist Learning Center Courtyard and Terrace

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Dance Performance by Danza Azteca Guadalupeana
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Dance Performance by Lirios Folkoricos
12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Musical Performance by Gabriella Flores
1:00 p.m. – Fashion Show Featuring Catrinas Nashville
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – MNPS Ballet Folklorico Dance Group
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. – Dance Performance by Danza Azteca Guadalupeana

Sunday, November 3 | Main Stage | Arboretum

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Musical Performance by Arrasadora Banda Tenaz
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Musical Performance by Rosa Rodriguez V.

Art and Activities

Marigold Flower Crowns

Flowers, which symbolize the brevity of life, are an essential element of Day of the Dead celebrations, but none more than the marigold or *cempasúchil*. In addition to decorative uses, marigolds are believed to attract the souls of the dead to the altars prepared for them. Guests can create their own paper marigolds and affix them on a headband to wear throughout the day.

Paper Calaveras

During the celebration of El Día de Los Muertos, sugar skulls or *calaveras* are often used to adorn the memorial altars and represent the spirits of a deceased loved one. Patrons can decorate a paper version with vibrant colors typically seen throughout the festivities.

Papel Picado Coloring Sheet

Papel picado is a traditional Mexican folk art that involves cutting intricate designs into tissue paper or other thin materials to create banners, flags or decorations. These items are often used to decorate streets, homes, and memorial altars during holidays and celebrations. Learn about some of the important symbols and imagery associated with El Día de los Muertos through miniature coloring sheets and string multiple together to create your own strand of colorful *Papel picado*.

Memory Tree

Honor the reason for El Día de los Muertos by writing the name or memory of a loved one on a colorful slip of paper and adding it to the memory tree in Massey Auditorium.

Seeds in the Cheekwood GROWS Garden

Stop by the Cheekwood GROWS Garden from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. to learn about the significance of marigolds or *cempasúchil*. Seeds are also an important part of Day of the Dead celebrations and represent the element of the Earth. Guests can take apart dried flowers to harvest seeds from the garden, decorate a seed packet, and take seeds home to grow for next year's celebration.

Photo opportunity with Catrina & Catrin Puppets

Stunning skeleton puppets set up inside the Frist Learning Center Great Hall provide the perfect backdrop for a memorable photo and memento of the event. *La Catrina*, a figure made famous by artist José Guadalupe Posada, is synonymous with El Día de los Muertos.

Murals

Murals depicting the Day of the Dead have a strong history throughout Latin America, highlighted by the works of Diego Rivera and José Guadalupe Posada, the creator of the iconic *La Catrina* figure. Students from local middle and high schools will draw inspiration from these artists and create large-scale works which will be on display in the Frist Learning Center Great Hall for guests.

Art and Food Vendors

Colorful open-air markets line the streets of Latin America during El Día de los Muertos, as local merchants sell food, flowers, art, and handmade items which people buy to decorate their altars and tombs. Cheekwood will recreate that scene with a wide variety of vendors featuring art, jewelry, gift items, and traditional foods from local restaurants and bakeries.

Ticket Information

The event is free for Cheekwood members and children ages 17 and under. Tickets cost \$20 for adult non-members. Reserve tickets now at <https://cheekwood.org/calendar-events/el-dia-de-los-muertos/>

El Día de los Muertos is sponsored by Asurion and supported by Nissan.

About Cheekwood Estate & Gardens

With its intact and picturesque vistas, Cheekwood is distinguished as one of the leading Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the 1930s estate, with its 30,000-square-foot Mansion and 55-acres of gardens, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum, and art museum with furnished period rooms and galleries devoted to American art from the 18th to mid-20th centuries. The property includes 13 distinct gardens including the Blevins Japanese Garden and the Bracken Foundation Children's Garden, as well as a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring outdoor monumental sculpture. Each year, Cheekwood hosts seasonal festivals including Cheekwood in Bloom, Summertime at Cheekwood, Cheekwood Harvest and Holiday LIGHTS. Cheekwood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and nationally as a Level II Arboretum. It is a three-time voted USA Today Top 10 Botanical Garden, in 2024 received a Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award, and in 2021 was named by Fodors as one of the 12 Most Beautiful Gardens in the American South. Cheekwood is located eight miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive. It is open Tuesday through Sunday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., with extended days and hours of operation depending on the season. Visit cheekwood.org for current hours and to purchase advance tickets required for admission.

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Images for Media

<https://show.pics.io/press-images/collection/66fffe9891652ff4eb87a7a7>

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