

Fiesta de las Calabazas

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Here in the scorching, sizzling temps of Arizona, the arrival of fall and the end of 100-plus temperatures for eight or nine months is definitely cause for celebration. If you're looking for a way to enjoy the (slightly) cooler temps, make sure you attend the Fiesta de las Calabazas this weekend, the annual pumpkin harvest created in 2000 to celebrate the beginning of the fall season.



Making for a bit of a road trip, the Fiesta de las Calabazas (which means Pumpkin Festival in Spanish), will take place this Saturday, Oct. 3, at Oracle State Park: Center for Environmental Education, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Oracle State Park is in Oracle, Arizona—about 45 minutes north of Tucson. The park will be closed starting on Oct. 1 for budget restrictions, except for special events and school programs.) The festival, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is a family-friendly and fun way to welcome the arrival of autumn, featuring live music, local talent, kids activities, cultural diversity of the Oracle area and plenty of pumpkins.

The Fiesta de las Calabazas was initially founded by Linda Leigh, Jim Hewitt and Lynn Perez-Hewitt with the support of the Center for Sustainable Prosperity in 2000, and ever since the 2001 Fiesta was held on Oct. 13, boasting 800 visitors and five bands, the festival has been a big hit for Arizona families. The purpose of the Fiesta over the years has been to promote economic growth in this rural part of Arizona through use of local artists, craft vendors, gardeners and performers, as well as support the eastern Pinal County's economic and cultural diversity.



This year's Fiesta surely won't be short on entertainment, with musical talent InAscent (a singer-songwriter girl duo that utilizes guitar, harmonica and vocals), as well as Fiesta favorite since 2000 The Tortolina Gut Pluckers (a beloved bluegrass band that has been playing around southern Arizona for more than 25 years). In addition to the music, a variety of activities will be held throughout the day-long Fiesta. Look forward to lots of food vendors, pumpkins and gourds, archery lessons, kids activities, guided tours of the historic Kannally Ranch House and a fine art show in the living room, an environmental education trail program, and a presentation from literary actor Kim Stone in celebrating the life and writing of Aldo Leopold, who first came to the Arizona Territory in 1909 to work for the U.S Forest Service. Additionally, for the purpose of crushing mesquite pods into flour, Desert Harvesters of Tucson will have their hammer-mill set up at the Fiesta and visitors are welcome to bring buckets of clean pods for milling into flour for home cooking use.

Event parking will be available at Oracle State Park with a normal park entrance fee of \$6 per vehicle. For more information on the Fiesta de las Calabaza, call 520.896.2425 or visit: www.calabazas.org