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Carnaval San Francisco Marks 48 Years with “La Copa del Pueblo — The People’s Cup,” a Soccer-Inspired Celebration

Fútbol, Culture, Community, and Economic Empowerment Light Up San Francisco

During Memorial Day Weekend

May 23-24, 2026



SAN FRANCISCO, CA — January 14, 2026 — Carnaval San Francisco is back! As the San Francisco Bay Area prepares to host the FIFA World Cup™, one of the city's most iconic cultural celebrations is stepping onto the global stage. Free and open to the public, Carnaval San Francisco returns Memorial Day weekend for its 48th annual festival, unveiling a timely new theme: “La Copa del Pueblo - The People's Cup.”

Rooted in the belief that soccer belongs to everyone — from neighborhood parks to international stadiums - Carnaval San Francisco 2026 channels the same passion, pageantry, and unity that define the world's most beloved sport. The theme reflects both the Bay Area's role as a **World Cup Host City**, welcoming six matches in 2026—including five group-stage games and one Round of 32 knockout match — and **Carnaval's** own legacy of bringing communities together through culture, music and movement.

“Carnaval San Francisco is more than a festival, it’s where our community comes together to celebrate our cultures, our creativity, and our joy,” said Rodrigo Durán, Executive Director of Carnaval San Francisco. “As legendary Colombian midfielder Carlos “Pibe” (“The Kid”) Valderrama once said, ‘Soccer is about passion, about expressing yourself, about uniting people.’ This year’s theme, ‘*La Copa del Pueblo*’ embodies that same spirit. Like Carnaval, fútbol is for everyone: it connects us, inspires us, and fills our neighborhoods with unstoppable energy.”

A Season of Cultural Events Leading to Carnaval San Francisco

Leading up to Memorial Day weekend, Carnaval San Francisco will host a series of events across the city, building momentum toward the main festival while spotlighting local artists, performers and community organizations.

- **Fat Tuesday Season Kickoff**

Tuesday, February 17 | 6–10 PM | Mission District venues | Free

- **King & Queen Dance Competition**

Saturday, March 28 | 4–6 PM | KQED | \$25 in person

Live Watch Party at Casa de Carnaval, 683 Florida St, San Francisco: \$15 in person | \$10 online

- **20th Annual CubaCaribe Festival**

Wednesday, April 15, | Time TBD | Casa de Carnaval, 683 Florida St, San Francisco

- **Carnaval Pride Night with Mission Lotería**

Friday, April 24 | 6–8 PM | Casa de Carnaval | \$20

- **NightLife at the California Academy of Sciences**

Thursday, May 7 | 6–10 PM | Fee TBD

Special activations may include table soccer teams, contests, and interactive fun.

Two-Day Festival and Iconic Grand Parade

Saturday, May 23 & Sunday, May 24 | 11 AM–6 PM | Harrison Street (16th–24th)

The festival transforms the Mission District with dynamic interactive zones highlighting music, dance, wellness, youth entrepreneurship, and cultural traditions from across the Americas:

- Fútbol Soccer Pavilion & Tournament
- Health & Wellness Pavilion
- Youth Entrepreneur Zone
- Skate Pavilion
- Colores de Amor Stage
- Indigenous Roots Pavilion
- Drum Pavilion

Grand Parade – Sunday, May 24 | 9:30 AM–2:00 PM

The weekend culminates with Carnaval's Grand Parade featuring dazzling costumes, boisterous live music, and vibrant dance ensembles. **Grandstand tickets: \$35, VIP viewing available.**

The procession begins at the corner of 24th and Bryant streets, moves west to Mission Street, continues north on Mission to 15th Street, turns east on 15th & Mission Street (20 City Blocks), and concludes at South Van Ness Avenue. This spectacular parade is the culmination of Carnaval San Francisco's two-day celebration, bringing more than 3,000 dancers, musicians, and artists representing the diverse cultures from Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, Colombia, Bolivia, Trinidad & Tobago, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and more. With dazzling floats, vibrant costumes, and non-stop movement, it is a living exhibition of unity and cultural memory.

Economic Impact: A Major Boost for Local Business and Tourism

Carnaval San Francisco is more than performances—it's a powerful economic engine for the city, drawing over 500,000 attendees and infusing \$16 million annually into local businesses and street vendors, particularly in the Mission District and surrounding neighborhoods while also creating opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive.

“Congratulations to Carnaval San Francisco for celebrating 48 years of culture, community joy, and economic empowerment in the Mission District and across San Francisco,” said Susana Rojas, Executive Director of Calle 24 Latino Cultural District. “Carnaval is more than a celebration—it is a lasting investment in our community.”

“Carnaval San Francisco truly reflects the heart and spirit of our city, celebrating culture, creativity, and community,” said Lynn Bruni-Perkins, Executive Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer of the San Francisco Travel Association. “Beyond its extraordinary performances and traditions, Carnaval is a vital driver of local prosperity, drawing more than half a million visitors and generating millions for local businesses, restaurants, and hotels. It exemplifies how one of San Francisco's signature multicultural events makes San Francisco an attractive destination for travelers from around the world.”

Sponsorship Opportunities

Carnaval San Francisco is made possible through the support of mission-driven sponsors who believe in culture, connection, and economic empowerment. Sponsorship offers an opportunity to support one of San Francisco's most beloved free, family-friendly celebrations while connecting with hundreds of thousands of attendees from across the Bay Area and beyond.

For sponsorship inquiries, contact Rodrigo Duran at rodrigo@carnavalsf.org or visit www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org/sponsor.

About Carnaval San Francisco

Founded in 1978, Carnaval San Francisco is the largest multicultural celebration on the West Coast honoring the diverse traditions of Latin America, the Caribbean, and beyond through music, dance, art, and community engagement. A family-friendly event, Carnaval San Francisco brings together neighbors, friends, and visitors of all ages for a weekend of joy, creativity, and cultural pride. Each year, the festival features top headliners, vibrant performances, and interactive experiences that showcase local and international talent while celebrating the Bay Area's rich multicultural heritage.

For more information, schedule, and updates visit - CarnavalSanFrancisco.Org and follow us on [Instagram @CarnavalSF](#); [Facebook @CarnavalSanFrancisco](#); [YouTube Channel @CarnavalSF](#)

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