

Comedian Atsuko Okatsuka is the Parade Grand Marshal for the 2026 Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, March 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 59th annual Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival (NCCBF) is coming back on the weekends of April 11-12 and April 18-19, 2026 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. We are honored to be one of California's most prominent celebrations of Japanese and Japanese American culture, as well as the largest Cherry Blossom Festival in the West Coast. Based in one of three remaining Japantowns in the United States, our Festival symbolizes the arrival of spring and cherry blossoms in San Francisco.

Since 1968, the NCCBF has continued to showcase the vibrant colors and grace of Japanese and Japanese American culture, and to represent the diversity of San Francisco's Japantown community. The Festival audience has grown considerably for the past 59 years, typically hosting more than 220,000 guests over the course of two weekends. The Festival helps to bring together local artists, non-profit food booths, cultural groups and performers to celebrate the arrival of spring in the City.

This year we are proud to announce Atsuko Okatsuka as our Parade Grand Marshal. The Taiwanese-Japanese American writer, actor and comedian was named one of Variety's "Top 10 Comics to Watch" in 2022 and has followed that up with 2 comedy specials ("The Intruder" and most recently "Father"). Known for her iconic bowl-cut and joyous sense of humor, the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival is honored to have her as our Grand Marshal. Atsuko routinely blends wit and wisdom as she speaks candidly about her multicultural (and sometimes chaotic) upbringing. After the parade, Ms.Okatsuka will be performing briefly for festival goers on the Webster street main stage.



Due to renovations of the Japantown Peace Plaza this year, NCCBF is excited to continue our expansion of our Festival onto Sutter Street for our first weekend. This will allow more space for increased vendor and food booth space, as well as provide access to the main stage at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California and Nihonmachi Little Friends.

Some of the programming Festival attendees can look forward to include:

April 11, 12, 18 and 19

Local Art and Craft Vendors

Non-Profit Food Bazaar

Sapporo Beer Garden (must be age 21 and over)

Community and Sponsor Information Booths

Live Musical and Cultural Performances (Webster Street Stage & Japanese Community Center of Northern California)

Japanese Culture & Craft Exhibits (Japanese Community Center of Northern California, US Bank Community Room, East Mall, Nihonmachi Little Friends, Hokka Nichi Bei Kai)

Children's Cherry Blossom Village, Kodomo no Sakura Machi (Post Street outside Kinokuniya Mall area) NOTE: Children's Village is not open on Sunday, April 20

Sunday, April 19

Senior Appreciation Brunch in Hotel Kabuki will thank seniors throughout the Northern California Japanese American community for their dedicated volunteer services and leadership. This year the parade is honored to feature both the San Francisco Taru Mikoshi and the Kanda Mikoshi together for the first time since 2019. These portable shrines (or mikoshi) will be carried through the parade. The Kanda Mikoshi was gifted to us by Kanda Myojin, a famous shrine in Tokyo. We will also have the iconic Taru Mikoshi out on our Grand Parade as an incredible finale to cap the final day of the Parade.

The 2026 Grand Parade Community Marshals will be Roy and PJ Hirabayashi (the founders of San Jose Taiko and among of the pioneers of American taiko) as well as Steve Nakajo (Mr. Nakajo is a San Francisco Fire Commissioner and the Co-Founder and former Executive Director of Kimochi Senior Center and the Co-Founder of Nihonmachi Street Fair. He also previously served as the Co-Chair of the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival as well.)

The Parade will begin at the Civic Center Plaza and proceed up Polk Street to Post Street, ending in Japantown at the corner of Post and Fillmore Streets.

The Festival encourages all attendees to enter the official Festival raffle, which goes directly into supporting our annual cultural programming. More information and tickets are available at the info booth located in KOHO - 2nd Floor of Japan Center East Mall and are \$5.00 each or \$20.00 for 5 tickets. The grand prize is a round-trip ticket to Japan courtesy of Japan Airlines.

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