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Eye Street

Museum open for altar-ations

Celebration honoring the dead to draw thousands for tributes, festivities

BY STEFANI DIAS
The Bakersfield Californian
sdias@bakersfield.com

Death gets a bad rap this time of year: zombies want to eat your flesh, vampires want to bite your neck and ghosts want to scare the daylights out of you. But Dia de los Muertos — which falls a couple of days after that *other* death-obsessed holiday — is a chance to celebrate and honor loved ones.

For the sixth year, the Bakersfield Museum of Art will hold its *Altars de Familia*, an occasion that allows residents to honor the dead and celebrate the day. The event, from 4 to 9 p.m., includes a party with music, dancing and vendors in Central Park at Mill Creek, student contest entries and the "Photography in Mexico" exhibit inside the museum in addition to the homemade altars in the museum's sculpture garden.

In response to the celebration's growing popularity, the museum increased the number of altar spaces from 30 to 50.

"They're all good spots, but we didn't want everybody's artwork being crushed together," said Matt Munoz, the museum's marketing director.

"We didn't have to advertise it much. People knew when they



This altar, by Sonyia Alvarez of Mira Monte High, pays tribute to pop singer Michael Jackson. The entry is one among several featured at the annual *Altars de Familia* event.

should call in," and it was fully booked within three weeks, he said.

Each year, the event sees the return of many participants, who build altars for loved ones and tributes to celebrities.

"The way these families design these elaborate altars, it is truly a work of art," Munoz said. "A lot of creativity goes into it."

Among those planning to return is Briana Rivera, who said she was initially inspired by a family visit to the museum.

"We loved the meaning of the celebration," said Rivera, 30. "It's been fun every year."

This is year marks the fifth

Sixth annual Altars de Familia

When: 4 to 9 p.m. Sunday

Where: Bakersfield Museum of Art, 1930 R St., and Central Park at Mill Creek

Admission: \$3, free for children 6 and under

Information: 633-5495

Altars event for the instructional assistant at Golden Valley High School.

"Everyone's altar is different. You end up recognizing other people that you haven't seen in years and talking to the families, reuniting with a lot of people."

The altars reflect both the dearly departed and those honoring them, Rivera said. She will pay tribute to her grandparents, two uncles and two cousins with portraits she's painted on glass candle holders to accompany photos and other personal memorabilia.

"I keep them forever in my thoughts. Through my creativity, you can tell what their personalities were like."

"One of my uncles (Andrew Marquez Jr.), he was a 49ers fan and an Angels fan, so I made sure I had something 49ers and Angels for him."

For grandmother Isabel Marquez, "I still have some of the items she had in her kitchen, some jewelry and her favorite flowers, which are roses."

Rivera will also honor her Chihuahua, Chuchito, who died this

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HENRY A. BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Liberty High student Anaya Behan's created a skull art piece for the *Altars de Familia* annual Dia de Los Muertos event at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

Guy Fieri's eatery coming to Bakersfield

BY JENNIFER SELF
The Bakersfield Californian
jself@bakersfield.com

Celebrity chef Guy Fieri will open one of his Johnny Garlic's restaurants in Bakersfield, a company spokesman confirmed this week. And this place, with its seared yellow fin ahi and bourbon buffalo meatloaf, is no diner, drive-in or dive.

Bruce Marano, chief operating officer for the chain, responded via email Tuesday to Californian restaurant critic Pete Tittl, who was inquiring about the restaurant's rumored plans to open at The Marketplace in the southwest

"Yes, what you have heard is correct! We are very excited to be entering the Bakersfield market. ... See you in Bako soon!"

Marano referred Tittl to two of his associates, who didn't respond by press time to questions about when the restaurant will open or whether Fieri will visit. Representatives of the shopping center also had not returned calls for comment by Wednesday afternoon.

The Californian reported earlier this month that chain executives were eyeing a space at The Marketplace formerly occupied by Coldwater

Creek.

Johnny Garlic's has restaurants in Sacramento, Dublin, Windsor, San Jose and Brentwood. The chain, which opened its flagship location in Santa Rosa in 1996, actually predates Fieri's TV fame ("Diners, Drive-ins & Dives" and "Guy's Big Bite" are just two of the Food Network shows he hosts).

Johnny Garlic's features a fusion-cuisine mix of salads, sandwiches, flatbreads, pasta, chicken, seafood and steaks. Among the intriguing items on the regular menu are the sashimi won tacos (\$14.50), volcano chicken (\$17.50),

cherry barbecue ribs (\$28) and "Old Skool" bananas Foster (\$7.95).

The specialty after-dinner drinks, all \$10, include chocolate mochi-tini (\$10) and the jammin' Jamaican.

The value-conscious lunch menu offers all items — salads, pastas and sandwiches — for \$10.

Fieri, 46, shot to fame in 2006 after winning Season 2 of "The Next Food Network Star." He lives in Northern California with his wife and two sons.

— Californian dining columnist Pete Tittl contributed to this report



LEZLIE STERLING / SACRAMENTO BEE

Chef Guy Fieri puts finishing touches on a dish at the Johnny Garlic's in Sacramento that opened in April 2013.



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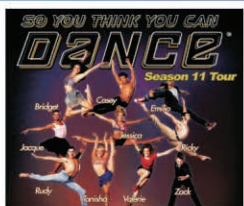
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SYMPHONY
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HENRY A. BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Jenn Villanueva from Frontier High created this skull art entry for the Altares de Familia event at the Bakersfield Museum of Art.

ALTARES

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year at age 12, with a tribute she designed with sister Brittaney Rivera.

"His favorite treat was Pupperoni so we'll have that. My younger sister just made a papier-mache Chihuahua. We're going to have that with his collar on it."

Along with family, Briana Rivera will honor Jenni Rivera (no relation), the Mexican singer who died in a 2012 plane crash.

"She loved butterflies, so I'm going to make sure I have a lot of butterflies. I've met a couple of her family members and I am going to put (up) pictures I've taken with her daughter and her mother."

Celebrity tributes are almost as popular as family ones, especially among the young. This year's youth entries — 60-plus calaveras (skulls) and altars from local students — honor many stars, including Gene Kelly, Michael Jackson and Robin Williams, who died in August.

Student works will be displayed in the museum's banquet room Sunday with first- through third-place winners in skull and altar categories announced at 7:15 p.m.

Munoz said guests should also check out the "Photography of Mexico" exhibit, a partnership with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

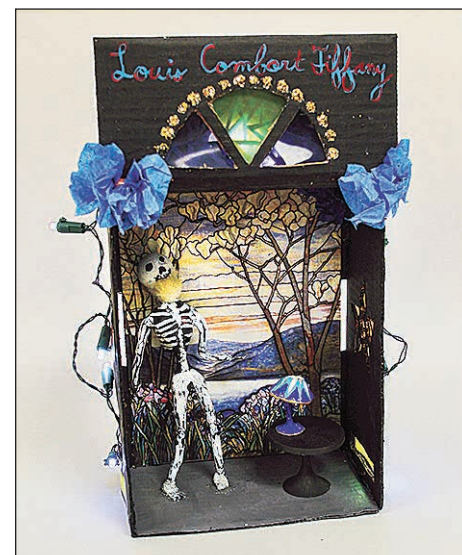
BMoA curator Vikki Cruz "will be there to provide mini tours and give information," Munoz said. "SFMOMA provided the (photo) information in Spanish as well, with laminated cards they provided for us."

Party in the park

Bilingual volunteers will be assisting on the museum grounds as well as in the park, where the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce will coordinate entertainment and vendors.

"We're letting the reins loose a little bit," Munoz said. "There are a lot of logistics and the chamber knows how to handle these big events like (their) Menudo Cookoff."

The event will debut its first beer garden, and food vendors will sell traditional holiday treats such as pan de muerto and



Liberty High student Celeste Ablin pays tribute to artist Louis Comfort Tiffany.

sugar skulls as well as tamales, tortas, burritos, posole, tacos, funnel cakes, deep-pit sandwiches and more.

Francis Alvarez, who serves on the museum's maintenance staff and moonlights as a makeup artist, will lead her crew in skull face-painting. Other creative types will be selling art and other designs.

"Lots of vendors, tons of artists, independent artisans that sell arts and crafts with a Latin flair," Munoz said.

Entertainment runs all day on the main stage at the park, starting with the Aztec opening ceremony at 4:15 p.m. featuring dancing from Ballet Folklórico Mi Tierra. Other performances include live mariachi music by Mariachi Juvenil 30/30, Mexican folk dancing by groups CCAAT Bakersfield, Ballet Folklórico Huastecalli, Escuelas Unidas and music from Mento Buru.

Last year more than 5,500 people attended Altares, and Munoz expects more this year.

"Mariachi Juvenil 30/30 is one of the most successful in the youth mariachi organizations in the Central Valley," Munoz said. "All the mariachi, folklorico groups are very youth-oriented. During the performances, the audience is always packed."