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Oaxaca's "intimate" new festival promises to delight even the most discerning foodies.

FESTIVALS

A Siren Song for Mexican Food (& Wine) Lovers

If you want to feel, smell, and *taste* history, take in the ancient ruins, magnificent Colonial-era architecture, and cobblestone streets of Oaxaca de Juarez (Oaxaca City), one of Mexico's historic crown jewels.

Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Madre range in southwestern Mexico, Oaxaca (wah-HAH-kah) has been home to the Zapotec and Mixtec indigenous people for thousands of years. Its vibrant artisan community draws tourists from across the globe to wander through small galleries, boutiques, and museums. But equally important are its culinary arts...

Oaxaca is considered the gastronomic center of Mexico (though Mexico City and Puebla are valid contenders). It's where you go to eat. The cuisine is a culmination of many indigenous influences, whether it's a street vendor empanada, a traditional fermented drink (*pulque*) at the *mercado*, a *tlayuda* at a family-run café, or a stunning presentation of chicken mole at a higher-end restaurant. And let's

not forget the locally produced mezcals and the variety of Mexican wines being poured all over town.

I spent my career in the culinary world, and authentic, flavorful food and drink was a top priority as my husband and I rode our motorcycle throughout Mexico [scouting for a new hometown](#). After several trips to Oaxaca, including an extended eight-month stay, I knew this city met my foodie criteria. I had time to learn the *mercados*, cook with our house-

keeper, go to homes for holiday meals, shop, cook and live with a family in a nearby village, learn how to make chocolate, go to craft beer and mezcal tastings, and dine in some of the most delicious restaurants you'll find anywhere.

Then I thought: *What if I could give others the same taste of Oaxaca that took me eight months to discover, but do it in just a few days?*

And so, the [Oaxaca Food & Wine Festival](#) was conceived... launching February 20-23, 2025.

"An effortless way to learn about and enjoy all kinds of Oaxacan cuisine."

The festival is designed to give attendees an effortless way to learn about and enjoy all kinds of Oaxacan cuisine through eight different events, each crafted to be an intimate experience. This is not a mass market event; restaurants and artisan workshops are not set up for large crowds. There will be wine-pairing dinners, mole and mezcal tastings, a chocolate and cacao workshop (yes, you will make your own chocolate bar), a market tour with lunch at the Hall of Smoke, brunch at a Michelin-noted restaurant, and artisanal activities that spotlight Oaxaca's rich cultural heritage as well its talented chefs.

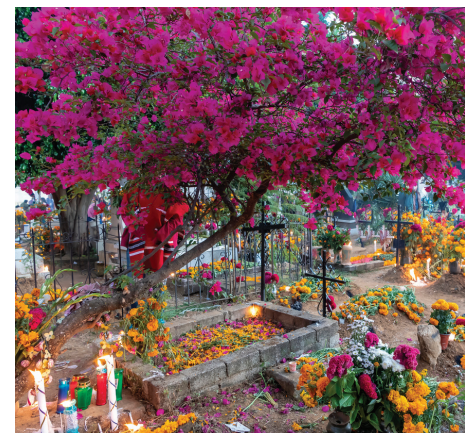
To make it easy, I've put together a few [VIP packages](#) that include lodging and all events. Alternatively, you can book your own lodging, still buy an all-event package, or buy individual [tickets](#).

Build in Time to Explore...

If you're making the trip, I hope you'll take some extra time to explore the immediate region. You may be inspired to join the growing number of expats...

I put together [several private tours](#), with a trusted tour operator that I personally know, to highlight the artistic crafts indigenous to the neighboring villages. If you're considering Oaxaca as a long-term overseas home, I'm happy to help with some pointers; email me at: openminded-venture1@gmail.com. Browsing through these FB pages will help orient you, too: [Expats Oaxaca](#), [Oaxaca Community](#), [Expats, Foreigners & Locals in Oaxaca](#), [Oaxaca For Rent/Sale](#), [Short Stay Rental](#).

—Donna Shields



Oaxacan graves are decorated with flowers, candles, and the deceased's favorite food for the *Día de los Muertos* festival.