

WILL 2026 BE THE YEAR OF THE 3,000 POUND PUMPKIN?

World's Elite Giant Pumpkin Growers Head to Half Moon Bay for the 53rd Annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. —August 16, 2026 — The biggest pumpkins on the planet are getting bigger, and the once unimaginable **3,000 pound barrier is suddenly within striking distance.**

On Monday, October 12, the world's elite giant pumpkin growers return to Half Moon Bay for the **53rd Annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off**, the legendary heavyweight championship of gargantuan gourds in the World Pumpkin Capital.

The current official world record stands at an astounding **2,819 pounds, 4 ounces**, set by twin brothers Ian and Stuart Paton in England in 2025. Their enormous pumpkin surpassed the previous **2,749 pound world record set by Travis Gienger at the Half Moon Bay Weigh Off in 2023.**

Now the question is irresistible:

Who will be the first to break 3,000 pounds?

WORLD RECORDS. BIG MONEY. ENORMOUS PUMPKINS.

Spectators are welcome to watch the drama unfold as colossal Atlantic Giants arrive at the IDES Grounds and are carefully hoisted by forklifts and special harnesses onto a massive **5 ton industrial scale.**

And there is serious money riding on every pound.

The **2026 champion will earn \$9 per pound**, along with the coveted Pumpkin King Champion Ring, Mel Mello Sr. Grand Champion Growers Jacket and other honors.

A 2,500 pound champion would earn \$22,500. A 2,800 pound winner would take home \$25,200. And if that magical 3,000 pound threshold is reached, the pumpkin would be worth \$27,000 from the weight prize alone.

Thousands more in prize money will be awarded through 20th place, with additional **\$1,000 special prizes** for the Biggest California Pumpkin, Biggest Coastside Pumpkin and Joe Cotchett Family Most Beautiful Pumpkin.

Then there is the biggest prize of all.

If a pumpkin entered in Half Moon Bay breaks and holds the world record at the conclusion of the competition, its grower will receive a **\$30,000 total mega prize**.

FARMER MIKE CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF PUMPKIN MAGIC

The 2026 Weigh Off will also feature a special appearance by legendary pumpkin carver **Farmer Mike Valladao**, affectionately known as the “Picasso of Pumpkin Carvers,” as he commemorates an incredible **40 years at the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival**.

Farmer Mike will bring his carving magic to the Weigh Off for a special giant pumpkin carving display, transforming an enormous orange canvas into an intricate work of art ahead of Pumpkin Festival weekend.

His appearance at the Weigh Off kicks off a milestone week celebrating four decades of carving the giant pumpkins that have become one of Half Moon Bay’s signature October attractions.

THE SUPER BOWL OF PUMPKIN WEIGH OFFS

What began in 1974 as a friendly challenge between Half Moon Bay, California, and Circleville, Ohio, has evolved into one of the world’s premier giant pumpkin competitions.

Half Moon Bay won that original showdown with a pumpkin weighing just **132 pounds**.

Today, the giants arriving at the scales can weigh more than 20 times as much.

The Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off is an officially sanctioned **Great Pumpkin Commonwealth** competition, with weighing and inspection officiated by the GPC and San Mateo County Department of Agriculture Office of Weights and Measures.

The competition has become an annual pilgrimage for elite growers who spend months meticulously nurturing their enormous Atlantic Giants, sometimes watching their pumpkins gain dozens of pounds in a single day during peak growing season.

With the world record now sitting just 181 pounds shy of the elusive 3,000 pound mark, the 2026 competition arrives at a fascinating moment in giant pumpkin history.

Could the next giant to rewrite the record books be headed for Half Moon Bay?

There is only one way to find out.

GROWERS: THINK YOU HAVE A CONTENDER?

The competition is open to growers of giant competition sized pumpkins, but **advance registration is required**.

Each contestant is limited to one entry, and pumpkins must be grown, cared for and entered by the contestant. Entries must meet all official competition requirements for condition and eligibility.

Growers are responsible for delivering their pumpkins to the IDES Grounds by **7 AM Monday, October 12**. Participating growers may bring a traveling party of up to four people, including the grower.

Registered growers and their traveling parties are also invited to the **Very Important Pumpkin Welcome Party** at Cameron's Inn & Pub on Sunday, October 11, from 5 to 8 PM. Growers are encouraged to bring their contenders for a special media preview before the big competition.

SPECTATORS WELCOME

The Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off is open for spectators to experience the competition firsthand.

Pumpkin weighing begins around **7 AM** and is expected to continue until approximately **11 AM**, followed by the awards presentation and growers' luncheon.

The competition will also be livestreamed on Facebook for giant pumpkin fans around the world.

QUICK FACTS

WHAT: 53rd Annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off

WHEN: Monday, October 12, 2026

TIME: 7 AM to 2 PM

WEIGHING: Approximately 7 AM to 11 AM, followed by awards and growers' luncheon

WHERE: IDES Grounds, 735 Main Street, Half Moon Bay, California

ADMISSION: Spectators welcome

TOP PRIZE: \$9 per pound for the champion

WORLD RECORD MEGA PRIZE: \$30,000 total prize if an entry breaks and holds the world record at the conclusion of the competition

SPECIAL PRIZES: \$1,000 each for Biggest California Pumpkin, Biggest Coastside Pumpkin and Joe Cotchett Family Most Beautiful Pumpkin

CURRENT WORLD RECORD: 2,819 pounds, 4 ounces, Ian and Stuart Paton, England, 2025

HALF MOON BAY RECORD: 2,749 pounds, Travis Gienger, 2023, then the world record

FIRST HALF MOON BAY CHAMPION: 132 pounds in 1974

SPECIAL APPEARANCE: Farmer Mike Valladao celebrates 40 years of pumpkin carving magic in Half Moon Bay

SANCTIONED BY: Great Pumpkin Commonwealth

GROWER REGISTRATION: weighoff.eventbrite.com

MORE INFORMATION: hmbweighoff.com

MEDIA INQUIRIES, INTERVIEWS & PRESS CREDENTIALS

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Media interested in interviews, grower arrivals, advance coverage, photography, video or access to the October 11 Very Important Pumpkin Welcome Party are encouraged to contact Ronan Fowler.