

'Ching Ming:' Paying Homage To The Dead in Los Altos

Chinese families will flock to cemeteries for the annual grave-sweeping holiday this weekend through Thursday, to burn incense, make offerings and picnic on the grass, reflecting on family members who have passed on.

By [L.A. Chung](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 30, 2013

Beginning this weekend through Thursday, many local cemeteries are celebrating [Ching Ming, the Chinese grave-sweeping day](#), including the [Gate of Heaven Cemetery](#).

[Skylawn Memorial Park](#), whose commanding view from the ridgeline off of Highway 92 encompasses both the Pacific Ocean and Crystal Springs Reservoir make it a favorite among Chinese, has two days of celebration planned Saturday, March 30 and Sunday, March 31. Its sister cemetery, Chapel of the Chimes in Hayward, celebrates on one day, Sunday.

The Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Los Altos will observe Ching Ming on the actual day of the holiday, Thursday, April 4. The cemetery staff is observing Easter over the weekend.

In China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, paying respects to deceased family members also represents a chance for a families to get together, often picnicking on the grounds and traditionally, kite-flying. It is also written as *Qing Ming*, using the same pronunciation, and can be celebrated any time between the spring equinox and the Ching Ming date.



Chinese immigrant associations have celebrated the "clear, bright" festival for more than a century in burial grounds throughout Colma, the city where San Francisco residents have been buried since 1912.

For at least two decades at Skylawn Memorial Park off Highway 92 at Skyline Boulevard, people have flocked to clean family headstones, offer food, incense and paper money to departed family members, as well. The Chi Sin Buddhist and Taoist Association will chant and offer blessings this weekend there, and the Purple Lotus will Temple will preside in Hayward.

Four years ago, the Gate of Heaven began a Catholic-based celebration in English and Mandarin that includes a light lunch, as well.

"The maintenance of family graves is a serious responsibility for the Chinese, who continue to feel a strong connection with family members who have died," wrote Rev. Gregory Ng Kimm, Pastor of St. Joseph of Cupertino Parish, in a March 19 article in [Valley Catholic](#).

For Chinese Catholics, Kimm wrote "the *Ching Ming* Festival can be a way of expressing their belief in the resurrection of the dead and the eternal life we all hope to enjoy one day."

Ching Ming at Gate of Heaven Cemetery will include the rosary at 10:40 a.m., the celebration of a Mass for the Deceased at 11 a.m., in the All Saints Chapel, and a special ceremony in which participants will symbolically offer to their loved ones incense, wine, flowers, and fruit. All will bow three times before the ancestral tablet in a traditional Chinese sign of respect. Afterwards, attendees have time for private visitation of graves.

Some cemeteries recognize that it's a chance to do some marketing. Skylawn sent out to a brochure this year:

"Come and Join us for our 2013 Ching Ming services. Events include a Chanting & Blessing, free lunch, bus service, Yee Bow, lion dancers and a free gift for the first 500 visitors each day. There are also lots of pre-need specials going on."

For those whose family members are buried overseas, [Skylawn offers a "Wall of Honor"](#) where the names of the deceased are written and family members can offer their joss sticks and prayers.

For more information about the Ching Ming events Skylawn or Chapel of the Chimes in Hayward, call 1-888-339-2888 or visit www.lifemarkgroup.com for more information

詳情請致電 1-888-339-2888 或瀏覽 www.lifemarkgroup.com

At Gate of Heaven Cemetery, contact Kathy Fanger at (650) 428-3730 or kfanger@dsj.org or www.ccdsj.org

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