



World Basketball Day

A fascinating game that started in North America and has grown over the years to be a major sensation, basketball, is actually a simple sport that is played all over the world in neighbourhood parks and household driveways as well as in enormous stadiums with thousands of fans. World Basketball Day is here to give a nod to the heritage of this sport, acknowledging the positive influence that basketball has on individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities.

#TRADITIONS

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Yule



Yule is a time of joy and reflection. This festive day carries deep significance, marking a period of renewal and hope. People gather to celebrate the return of light as the days begin to lengthen. Many find comfort in the

warmth of family and friends during this time. Traditions, both old and new, add a special touch to the season, bringing people together in a shared spirit of happiness. Yule invites everyone to pause, appreciate the moment, and look forward to brighter days ahead.

Reasons for Celebrating Yule

Yule is celebrated to honour the triumph of light over darkness. As the longest night passes, people rejoice in the promise of longer days. This shift in nature brings a sense of renewal, encouraging everyone to reflect on the past and plan

for the future. The day also emphasizes togetherness. Families and communities unite to share the warmth of their homes and hearts, strengthening bonds. Yule reminds us of the importance of connection, light, and new beginnings.

History

Yule, one of the oldest winter solstice celebrations, dates back thousands of years to the Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. Originally, it was a Norse festival called 'jöl,' which later became known as Yule. This celebration took place during the darkest time of the year, around the winter solstice, when the days were shortest and the nights were longest.

The festival also included other customs such as sacrifices to the gods and spirits. These offerings were meant to bring prosperity and protection to the community. Over time, Yule's significance and traditions spread beyond Scandinavia and became intertwined with other cultural practices, eventually influencing the Christian celebration of Christmas.

The Norse believed that this time marked the rebirth of the sun, a pivotal event in their mythology. Yule was a time for feasting, merrymaking, and various rituals intended to honour the gods and ensure the return of the light. The burning of the Yule log, a central tradition, symbolized warmth, light, and hope for brighter days ahead.

How to Celebrate Yule

- Light Up the Longest Night**
Celebrate Yule, one might begin by illuminating their space with candles and twinkling lights. These small beacons symbolize the return of sunlight and create a warm, cozy atmosphere. Adding some outdoor lanterns or fairy lights to the garden could make the night feel magical. This simple yet effective gesture brings a touch of enchantment to even the darkest evening.
- Gather 'Round the Hearth**
Another delightful way to honour Yule is by gathering friends and family around a crackling fire. If a fireplace isn't available, a few well-placed candles can create a similar effect. Sharing stories or reading from a favourite book makes the moment even more special. A fire's warmth not only heats the room but also sparks conversations and laughter.



"Being a student and having a drive to learn keeps me going. The opportunity to get inspired by all the young musicians out there helps me revamp myself. Age doesn't affect my energy and drive," he said last year. Zakir Hussain, the legendary tabla virtuoso and global ambassador of Indian classical music, who has died aged 73, leaves behind a timeless rhythmic legacy that will inspire generations. A child prodigy, he collaborated with Indian classical icons like Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan and Shivkumar Sharma, and global musicians like John McLaughlin and George Harrison.



Wah Ustad Wah! Ruk Kyun Gaye?

USTAD ZAKIR HUSSAIN

HAD BEEN AWARDED WITH PADMA SHRI IN 1988, PADMA BHUSHAN IN 2002, AND PADMA VIBHUSHAN IN 2023.



Tabla maestro, Ustad Zakir Hussain, performs with sitar maestro, Pandit Ravi Shankar, in New Delhi.

#OBITUARY

use the common toilets," Hussain told Nasreen Muzmi Kabir. Ofstage, Hussain was an avid reader and a fan of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series. He loved poetry, cricket, and tennis, counting Roger Federer among his heroes. His curiosity extended to biographies of musical greats like Ravi Shankar and Miles Davis, reflecting his hunger for stories that transcended boundaries. Hussain would also later say that his TV advert for a popular tea brand, Taj Mahal, 'made me famous in India.'

Hussain's death marks the end of an era but leaves an indelible mark on global music. Kabir, who chronicled his life, aptly captured his essence, "Zakir's extraordinary playing and the extreme sense of rigour that he brought to his art made him a phenomenon."

Music for Hussain was not just a career but a spiritual journey, a way to connect with people, traditions, and cultures across the globe. In his final years, Hussain remained as active as ever, performing, mentoring, and composing. "Being a student and having a drive to learn keeps me going. The opportunity to get inspired by all the young musicians out there helps me revamp myself. Age

doesn't affect my energy and drive," he said last year. Zakir Hussain, the legendary tabla virtuoso and global ambassador of Indian classical music, who has died aged 73, leaves behind a timeless rhythmic legacy that will inspire generations.

A child prodigy, he collaborated with Indian classical icons like Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, and Shivkumar Sharma, and global musicians like John McLaughlin and George Harrison. Born on 9 March, 1951, in Mahim, Mumbai, he was the eldest son of Ustad Alla Rakha, one of history's most iconic players of the tabla, a pair of traditional Indian hand played drums.

Hussain's journey, from a child prodigy to an internationally celebrated percussionist, was a masterclass in balancing tradition and innovation.

Hussain's life revolved around rhythm from the very beginning. The sound of the tabla was his first language, his earliest 'words.' By the age of 12, he was already performing globally, accompanying stalwarts like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan during his teenage years.

While rooted in the *Hindustani* classical tradition, Hussain possessed an insatiable curiosity that propelled him to explore other genres, leading to ground-breaking collaborations across the world.

In 1973, he co-founded *Shakti* with guitarist John McLaughlin, a group that fused Indian classical music with jazz and Western traditions, creating a new global sound. Over five decades, *Shakti* evolved, featuring luminaries like violinist I. Shankar, percussionist Vikku Vinayakram, and mandolin maestro U Srinivas.

Their first studio album in 46 years, *This Moment*, won the Grammy for Best Global Music Album in 2024, marking a fitting

finale to their 50th-anniversary tour. Hussain's virtuosity on the tabla was pivotal to *Shakti*'s success and to the global appreciation of Indian rhythms. He was a key collaborator in Planet Drum and Global Drum Project, both with *Grateful Dead* drummer Mickey Hart, earning him Grammy Awards in 1991 and 2008.

He worked with bano maestro Béla Fleck and bassist Edgar Meyer on the Grammy-winning *As We Speak* (2024), further cementing his status as a pioneer of cross-genre collaborations. He also collaborated with musicians as diverse as Yo-Yo Ma, George Harrison, Van Morrison and Billy Cobham, bringing Indian classical music to global audiences.

His ventures like *Tabla Beat Science*, a fusion of Indian classical music with electronic and world music, and orchestral works such as *Peshkar* for the Symphony Orchestra of India showcased his unrelenting drive to innovate while respecting his roots.

"The moment you think you're a maestro, you are distancing yourself from the others," Hussain told *Rolling Stone India* magazine earlier this year. "You have to be part of a group, and not dominate it."

This philosophy made him not only a consummate artist but also a lifelong learner and mentor.

Hussain's flamboyance and speed and precision of his performance earned him widespread admiration.

The New York Times, in its review of a 2009 jazz performance at Carnegie Hall, described his artistry as embodying "an impish strain of virtuosity." "He's a fearless technician and also a whimsical inventor, devoted to exuberant play. So, he rarely seems overbearing, even when the blur of his fingers rivals the beat of a hummingbird's wings." Zakir's 1973

musical project with English guitarist John McLaughlin, violinist L Shankar, and percussionist TH 'Vikku' Vinayakram brought together Indian classical and elements of jazz in a fusion that we had never heard of before.

He went on to work with western artists like Yo-Yo Ma, Charles Lloyd, Bela Fleck, Edgar Meyer, Mickey Hart, and George Harrison. The iconic star also shone at Grammy Awards. He was nominated seven times at the *Grammys* and won four times. In February 2024, he received three Grammys. The first Grammy win for him came in 2009, when he won in the Contemporary World Music Album category for his collaborative album *Global Drum Project* with Mickey Hart and Giovanni Hidalgo.

Ustad Zakir Hussain became a household name, when in 1988, he was roped in as the face of the Taj Mahal Tea brand.

The TV commercial, now regarded as a classic, had him sipping on the tea as a voiceover praises his craft and says, "Wah Ustad, wah!" to which the maestro responds, "Arre huzoor, wah Taj bolye!"

Hussain composed three concertos. His third, the first-ever concerto for tabla and orchestra, was premiered in India in September 2015, by the Symphony Orchestra of India, in Europe and the UK in 2016, and in the US in April 2017. The composer, who travelled and performed all across the globe, had reservations against performing at private gatherings and disliked latecomers. He was also very vocal in his views.

In a conversation with author Nasreen Muzmi Kabir, as written in her book *Zakir Hussain: A Life in Music*, Hussain said that a private gathering, corporate events or weddings are not places "where

music should be heard." "Those are places where people come to socialize, to drink and perhaps have a meal. That's not the way music should be heard. For me, it's the concert hall or the theatre, people take their seats, the hall darkens and we musicians take our place," he said.

Hussain would ask the organisers to close the doors once the performance begins and not allow latecomers.

Then there was the man himself. His broad smile, boyish good looks and curly locks, keeping rhythm with his fingers, gave him a distinctive star persona that sometimes went beyond his music.

The percussionist was once voted the 'sexiest man' by women readers of the Indian magazine *Gentleman* in 1994 in a competition against the likes of Amitabh Bachchan.

"The magazine team came to see me and wanted me to wear all these suits and jackets and Western clothes and feature on their cover. I think they were equally shocked and surprised that I won the greatest number of votes because they had assumed the winner would be Amitabh

Bachchan," Hussain is quoted as saying by Kabir.

Besides his work as a tabla player, Hussain also composed music for many movies, including 'Manto' and 'Mr. and Mrs. Iyer.'

He also acted in the Merchant Ivory film production 'Heat and Dust,' 'The Perfect Murder' and 'Sazz,' opposite Shabana Azmi.

Hussain also shared screen space with his father Allah Rakha in the iconic national integration song 'Mile Sur Mera Tumhara,' which premiered on Doordarshan.

He is survived by his wife Antonia Minneola, and two daughters, Anisa Qureshi and Isabella Qureshi. Apart from four Grammys, Hussain was the recipient of countless awards and honours, including Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the USA's National Heritage Fellowship and Officer in France's Order of Arts and Letters.

As his countless fans bid farewell to the artist, who transcended boundaries of music and of geography, and went too soon, many could only say, 'Wah, Ustad.'

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Zakir Hussain with his father, Ustad Alla Rakha Qureshi.

#LIFESTYLE

Outdoor Living Trends in 2025



The grass is always greener with these inspiring new aesthetics.

Over the course of the last few years, our outdoor living spaces have changed significantly. This is in large part due to the pandemic when the desire for porches and patios was at an all-time high. The demand for beautifully designed, thoughtfully curated exterior space has hardly waned since, and more of us are thinking about how to furnish these areas than ever before.

With this new interest has come a wave of new outdoor living trends. In 2025, expect to see these spaces look more beautiful than ever, from earth-toned furniture to full-blown kitchen suites.

Indoor Goes Outdoor

One of the biggest trends in the exterior design world is a move towards outdoor spaces resembling indoor ones. So, instead of just a few lounge chairs and a side table, people are designing top-to-bottom living rooms for their backyard.

Outdoor furniture is already indistinguishable from indoor pieces in terms of design, and this will continue. Materials will remain durable for outdoor conditions, but their tactile feel, aesthetics, and functionality will increasingly mirror indoor furnishings.

Another facet of this trend is a seamless connection between indoors and out in terms of both floor plan and construction. The aesthetic continuity between indoor and outdoor floors will play a key role, creating a fluid, visual transition that blurs the lines between the two environments.

Neutral and Earth Tones

It should come as no surprise that earth tones will be trending in outdoor spaces for the new year. These hues have made waves inside the home, and the great outdoors seems an even more natural fit for them. In 2025, outdoor spaces will embrace neutrals like warm taupes, terracotta, and olive greens, paired with grounding accents like deep forest greens, charcoal grays, and rusty metal tones. That doesn't mean that outdoor spaces will look bland, though. There's still room for



brighter hues, if anything, a neutral backdrop means a pop of colour will stand out even more. As outdoor spaces increasingly mirror interior aesthetics, the colour palettes will also adapt, incorporating warmer, homely hues that create a sense of comfort and cohesion.

Lush Greenery

Naturally, plants are an important part of an outdoor living space. In the past, a clean-cut look was often the approach, but designers say that's changing. There's a shift away from overly fussy landscaping and towards incorporating native plants

that have more of a wild nature. This freeform landscape design lends itself to finding a little oasis within the garden to reflect, relax, and enjoy the outdoors. The connection to nature will remain paramount. Landscapes will be designed to thrive in changing climates. Think drought-tolerant greenery, regenerative materials, and native plantings that create harmony with the environment.

Full Kitchens

Now, we're cooking. Kitchens, long a mainstay of the indoors, are now part of outdoor living. We're not talking about a single barbecue oven either; these newer iterations have just about everything you could possibly want.

Mixed Materials

Instead of just teak, the outdoor spaces of 2025 will incorporate a wide range of materials. Part of this has to do with new technologies and innovations, which enable different finishes and textiles to be used safely outside. Material choices will prioritize texture and sustainability. Raw stone, reclaimed wood, and clay finishes will take center stage.

Natural materials will be complemented by sleeker finishes like refined metals. Mixed materials continue to trend outdoors.

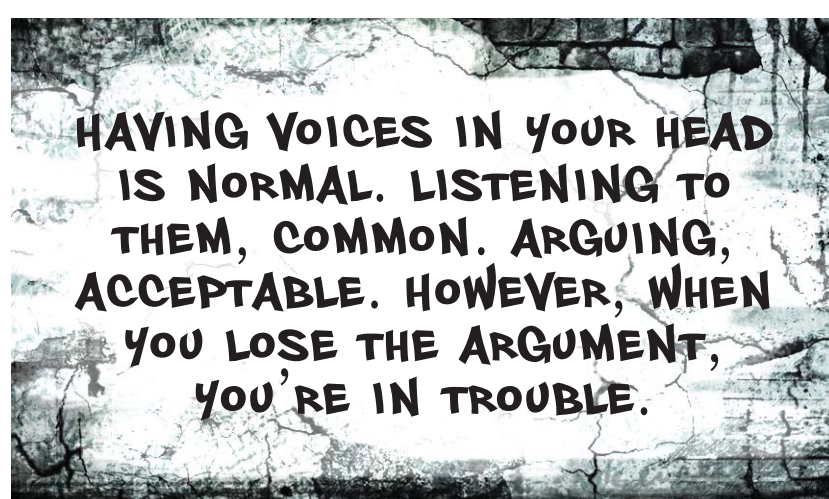
Smart Technology

Yes, smart technology is coming for your backyard too. These innovations will manifest in outdoor kitchens, where technology is increasingly a factor, as well as elsewhere, like automated lighting solutions. Technology will elevate these spaces. Smart systems will create (increasingly) personalized environments and immersive experiences.

Built to Last

Sustainability is top-of-mind now-days, and it's impacting how we approach outdoor spaces. Outdoor furniture of years past was often not well-made, and would only last a season before it needed to be thrown away. As we move into 2025, people are investing in more high-quality furnishings. People are trending towards really well-made outdoor pieces that last. They're understanding that it's the environmentally responsible thing to do.

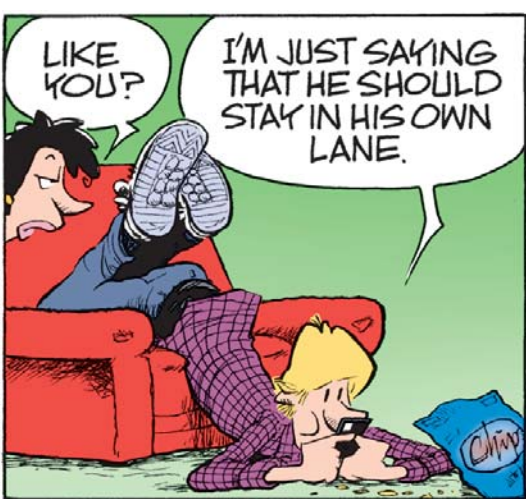
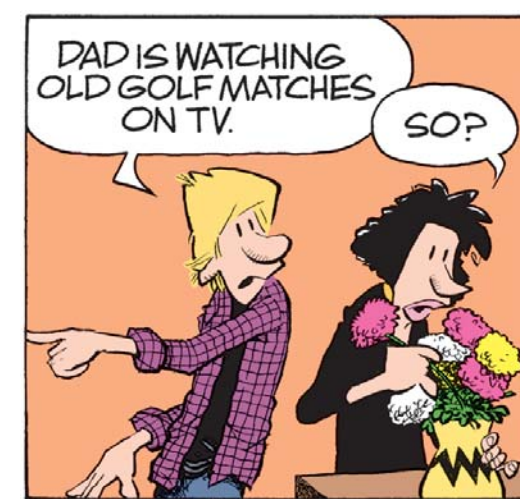
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