

# FORK IN THE ROAD

## Tastes of Asia in British Columbia

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Although we're on the Pacific Northwest coast, the sights, sounds and smells of Richmond, British Columbia, make us feel like we've taken a trip to Asia. We hop off the shiny, driverless Metro Vancouver SkyTrain at the Lansdowne Station, a legacy of the 2010 Olympics in this city that's home to Vancouver International Airport.

We head to Alexandra Road two short blocks north, commonly known as "Food Street." Much of the signage — on the box stores, electronic emporiums, and strip malls housing bakeries, fashion boutiques, and small shops — consists of Chinese characters that are unintelligible to us. Some 65 percent of the population of Richmond is Asian-Canadian, 44 percent of them from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Waves of immigration since the 1990s also brought an influx of settlers from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, Korea and the Philippines.

Like many visitors, we're here to savor the fusion that results from the blend of abundant natural resources and diverse cultures. Poised on the Fraser River delta, more than 37 percent of the fertile soil here is dedicated to agriculture. There are about 250 working farms, and Richmond is the largest producer of cranberries in North America. For food shopping, there are u-pick-it farms, roadside stands and the popular Steveston Farmers and Artisans Market, which is beside the largest commercial fishing port in Canada.

In the eight-square block area called Golden Village, there are more than 200 Asian restaurants and three Asian-themed malls. There's also an outpost of the Daiso, the Japanese \$2 store that boasts more than 50,000 products.

About half of the restaurants



JEROME LEVINE/PHOTOS FOR TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS

Buddha's Feast is a specialty at Jade Seafood Restaurant, one of many Asian spots in Richmond.



Crab claws with taro root breading, left, and sticky rice with pork wrapped in lotus leaves are among the Asian treats in an eight-square block area called the Golden Village.

House for milk-based bubble tea. With more than 100 combinations of flavors on the menu, the shop is one of dozens in the area

bubbles.

Jade Seafood Restaurant ([jade-restaurant.ca](http://jade-restaurant.ca)) is known for some of the best dim sum.

eight-page dim sum menu. The chef, Tony Luk, was named Chinese Chef of the Year by the Chinese Restaurant Association. The

### Chinese New Year

This year, the Chinese New Year falls on Jan. 23. For two weeks, beginning Dec. 31, traditional multicourse feasts are available at all Richmond's Chinese restaurants, including Jade Seafood Restaurant, Shanghai River and Northern Delicacy. Menus typically include rice cakes and steamed whole fish, which symbolizes the wish for abundance for the coming year.

Richmond's largest Asian mall, Aberdeen Centre ([aberdeencentre.com](http://aberdeencentre.com)), hosts its annual flower and gift fair Jan. 19-23 and has a countdown celebration with live music and entertainment beginning Jan. 22.

At the international Buddhist Temple, the largest Buddhist temple in Canada, a flower market is Jan. 20-22. On the morning of New Year's Day, the temple receives as many as 10,000 visitors for a prayer ceremony followed by a vegetarian lunch.

Famed Chinese musician Natalie Sin will be performing Jan. 28 at the River Rock Casino Show Theatre ([riverrock.com](http://riverrock.com)).

with taro root breading and sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaves with pork. At a nearby table, a group orders Buddha's Feast, a heaping vegetarian dish prepared with mushrooms, bok choy, bean and Brussels sprouts, and tofu.

Having no room left for dessert, we catch the train back to our hotel on the Vancouver waterfront, questioning our impulsive decision to start the day with bubble tea. It did provide an excuse for us to return soon for another sampling of the cuisine that has earned Richmond the reputation of having the best Chinese food outside China.