



## Chinese Culture Festival – 2024 By: Lucas Chen, 9th Grade, 9/2/2024

If you went to Capitol Hill on August 31, 2024, you would have found Tai Chi performers, people playing Go, lion and dragon dances, and stuffed pandas. This is no normal day in DC, it's the Chinese Culture Festival. Every year since 1993, it draws hundreds of people to gather at Capitol Hill, and clearly NOT for any political event.

The culture festival was created to spread awareness of Chinese culture, hence the name. Last year, my service group, Capitol Youth Outreach Club, volunteered at this festival, and my job was to walk around the city and do some advertising. This year, I switched to the reporter group. My job this time around was to take pictures and videos and write a report on the festival.

The first thing that caught my eye was how much larger the festival appeared compared to last year. It was held on two streets instead of just one. There were stages set at each end of the main street, white canopies everywhere, food stalls on a street connected to the main one,

and even a beer area.

My reporting job was going to take longer than expected. I started by taking a picture of all the food stalls. The first one was a kabob and naan bread (fluffy flatbread) stall. I was taking a picture of some sauteed chicken kabobs when the man running the place stopped me.

"What are you doing?"  
"Taking pictures of the food."  
"To get good pictures of food, try to take a picture very close to the food and at a 45 degree angle."

I took his advice, and it worked immediately. My final picture came out much better than my first one!

The next few stalls were matcha (crushed tea leaves), 冰粉 (bingfen) or ice jelly made from shoofly (aka Apple of Peru) seeds, and 煎饼果子 (jianbing guo zi). I didn't know what this was, so I asked the vendor, but she must have heard wrong, because she said they hadn't made any yet. After that was cleared up, I found



out that this was pretty much dough sticks wrapped in flatbread (a famous food from Tianjin). Other notable stands were for more kabobs, Korean BBQ, Hibachi, and even Beijing Duck made by a guy that was a James Beard Award finalist. I ended up eating hibachi for lunch. Jianbing Guo zi

After going through the food stands, I went to the main street and checked out everything there. What really caught my attention was a stand for Go. Go is a game where you put down black and white stones and try to get as much territory on the board as possible. I learned and played a game against a guy with

years of experience. I lost the match, but I did manage to keep all the stones I used on the board, so that was a plus. My dad also played a game of Go against another guy, an American political strategist, at the Go stand, and he won. The guy he played had 15-20 years of experience by then, so I was surprised.

The main events of the culture festival were the dances/performances. Most of the performances were dances, however there were some outliers. There was a girl who sang very well, a woman who played all kinds of traditional Chinese instruments, and my mom did a Tai Chi routine with her group. On the second stage, there were lion dances, percussion performances, and my dragon dancing team was also there. I said hi to them, specifically Derek and Evan, and I really liked their performance.

My favorite show was a martial arts routine done by Shaolin Temple

USA. It involved eight students and a Shaolin Monk. There was a guy throwing a whip around, kids swinging around chain whips, and the coach smashing a piece of wood with his head. The whole thing just looked awesome.

A completely unexpected and unplanned surprise for everyone at CYOC was when Miss DC stopped by to take a picture with us. My dad had seen her joining the parade, and so he asked her to take a picture with CYOC. When she came over, I asked myself, "who is that person?" and by the end of the festival, I was surprised to find out that it was Miss DC.

This cultural festival was enjoyable, and the only loss for me is that my event, archery, was cut out for no particular reason, and I hope that won't happen next year. I think everything else made up for that this year.

The next time you go to the culture festival, I hope you will not find it surprising but fun. I'm looking forward to an even bigger event in the future.



## 2024 Chinese Culture Festival By: Mia Gu 9th grade 9/2/2024

The Chinese Culture Festival is a yearly event held in Washington D. C. Capitol Hill; this year being held on August 31st. Entering the event, you can experience all different types of Chinese cuisines, cultural games like Go, and many traditional Chinese acts including Tai Chi, Peking operas, lion dances, and more serving as a great opportunity for foreigners to learn about Chinese culture. As part of the Capital Youth



Outreach Club, it is my job to write articles

highlighting special, and unique parts of the event.

When you first walk in the festival, you will be greeted by the countless different cuisine booths ranging from sweet pastries like blossom cakes or 桃花酥, to savory noodles and street food. With food being such a big part of Chinese culture, it is without a doubt a big portion of the festival with many people visiting because of the cuisines. Having interviewed several people, it came to my attention that almost all of them mentioned the food when asked about the festival. One said "I think the food made me want to come" also mentioning that the traditional Beijing dish, Peking duck, tasted pretty good which I can agree on because I tried it as well. Other popular foods amongst visitors included the traditional Chinese sweet Tanghulu (冰糖葫芦 in Chinese), and Chinese crepes better known as 煎饼果子. When asking visitors what their favorite foods

were that they tried, two responded with Tanghulu. This makes sense as Tanghulu is a really popular street food bought all over China. Besides those, there was also booths selling boba milk tea, ice jelly, fried and hand pulled soup noodles, meat sandwiches (肉夹馍), and more.

As I walked past the food booths, something that surprised me was that a lot of the booths had handmade things, including little keychains and sachets, and handmade Chinese green tea. When I walked up to them, they would explain to me how to make them and the culture behind it which I felt was a lot more meaningful than just selling a manufactured item. One person making the handmade Chinese green tea said she had been learning how to make tea for a while and decided to come to the Culture festival to share her passion and knowledge on the subject. I tried her handmade green tea, and it was really very good. A lot of booths and

performances stem from this passion, as when I asked why the performers and booth owners decided to come here, they said "I like to make people happy, and connect with my culture more." I loved how the overall feeling at the festival was so cheerful and welcoming, it seemed like everyone there was having a lot of fun doing what they loved.

Performances were also a big part of the event. Although I did not watch many (I was too captivated by everything else), the few I did watch were spectacular. I watched an Opera and singing act, along with a guy playing traditional Chinese bamboo flute. They sounded wonderful! As a flute player myself, it intrigued me how different the bamboo flute sounded. It was high pitched and shorter, the sound was like I was in a forest with birds chirping around me if that makes sense. Other acts I know people enjoyed were the martial arts, Tai chi is a fan favorite, and deservedly

so.

The last highlight I would like to mention is the parade. As me and the other volunteers of the Capital Youth Outreach Club walked down the street in the parade, there was an unexpected guest to greet us at the end of it; the one and only Miss District of Columbia. She came down to greet us all, and spent the time taking pictures with everyone who asked. It was really an amazing experience meeting her, and had the biggest smile greeting everyone who attended the event.

Overall, this year's festival was definitely an unforgettable experience with all the unique delicacies, handmade traditional items, and skilled performers. My personal favorite part of it all was, along with most of the others, the food. I would recommend going if you have not yet as it was a great time, and I am looking forward to what the festival will bring next year.



摄影: 华府青年家长