

Review of a Public Event

Audience: People new to Lunar New Year events

Writing Style: Blog post - review of a specific event that I attended

This past Saturday, I attended the City of Kirkland Lunar New Year event. From what I could discern, it seemed like mostly an event focused on the Chinese aspect of the holiday rather than other cultures. In general, I enjoyed the experience quite a bit despite not understanding a whole lot of the cultural context around it.

I ended up attending this on a whim; I happened to be in Kenmore visiting a friend the same day. We went to a restaurant in Kirkland, I saw a flyer for this and decided to go since I happened to be in the area anyways. The celebration started out in a bizarre fashion when I made small talk with a man inside the building. He, for some reason, was extremely interested in the amount of money I paid for wi-fi every month and whether I considered xfinity to be a “good” service provider. After that, I actually went inside properly with an eye mostly on trying a lot of the food at the event. I bought 4 of these fried snacks (somewhat similar to a crab thing I tried at a sushi place) that I forgot the name of. I enjoyed the food but had a small issue with the spice levels; they gave me a sauce packet that genuinely exceeded all expectations I had for spice levels.

I think the main attraction beyond trying the food was seeing the decorations and the costumes. They had around 5 people dress up in a huge snake-esque (honestly not sure what it was) costume and parade around, which in my eyes was clearly the “highlight” of the event. The costumes were actually crazy to me, both in terms of the precision and the sheer size of some of

them. I was not 100% sure what a majority of these were trying to depict or what they should have been called, but it was one of those things I simply appreciated out of sheer aesthetics.

The main thing I was curious about was a lot of the traditions that a lot of the people I grew up with talked about. For instance, during my time in grade school I remember a lot of the people celebrating Lunar New Year making the event primarily about these red envelopes that were supposed to contain money. I really had no idea what the significance of these envelopes was but at this event I was curious if this was something I would see a mention to. I actually ended up going back to a food stall and asking someone a few questions about these envelopes. They explained a lot about the tradition of the envelopes and their representation of luck, but mainly how it is very specialized who is given a red envelope. I mainly discerned that it was primarily a family custom, and not something that I should expect to see at a public event. I had a really good conversation with the son of this vendor, who also explained a lot of the history and the costumes that were present in the vicinity.

I actually ended up going to a restaurant that had a Lunar New Year special a few hours afterwards (Supreme Dumplings in Kirkland). I had a set of spicy dumplings which I enjoyed quite a bit, but what surprised me a lot was the “special” on offer. It was quite literally an online slot machine, where if your bill ended up being a certain amount, you got a few spins of this slot machine. To be candid, I was not expecting gambling to be a part of Lunar New Year celebrations but our server explained to me it was actually quite popular. According to them, people actually gamble in extremely high quantities purely because of the luck they associate with the Lunar New Year. They also told me about Chinese Blackjack, which differs from normal Blackjack in a way that I honestly did not understand at all. After we ate, we tried the online slot machine they had, which was genuinely pretty fun. Unfortunately, I struck out and

did not win big. I just got 5% off my bill, which I can't complain about, and the restaurant had really good food so it was overall quite a pleasant experience.

Despite not knowing too much about Lunar New Year, it was honestly really easy for me to enjoy the experience. The festival was interesting and had aesthetics that stole the show, and the Lunar New Year dinner was honestly great and the highlight of that day for me. If I'm in the area next year, I might have to go back and win a bigger prize. Overall, I really enjoyed the Lunar New Year experience and learned quite a bit about the cultures that celebrate it through this public event.