

Library examines Asian cultures through food traditions

Written by

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Asian Americans make up approximately six percent of Hennepin County residents. The largest groups are Hmong, Vietnamese, Asian Indian and Chinese. Asian celebrations are centered around food and Asian cuisine is known the world over for its rich flavors and spices.

This May, in celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Hennepin County Library's [Spice and Slice of Asia 2010](#) series explores the role food plays in Hmong, Indian, Korean and Vietnamese cultures. Local culinary professionals and community figures will share the history and traditions of food and festivities within their respective communities.

Mai Nguyen of Mai Village Restaurant, St. Paul, will discuss some special foods connected with Vietnamese celebratory dinners, including seven beef dishes. Librarian Phuoc Tran will talk about Vietnamese comfort foods with lotus as their main ingredient, and the symbolisms attached.

The Korean Service Center will present a typical kids' birthday table and describe significant birthday celebrations and foods consumed at other life-defining occasions.

Local culinary expert and award-winning cookbook author [Raghavan Iyer](#) will weave in personal stories of Indian foods such as whole milk creams, succulent opo squash croquettes and stewed plantains, and discuss their symbolic meanings in the Indian cultural tradition.

Hmong Culture Center representatives will discuss the role food plays in important and deeply religious Hmong ceremonies such as funerals and weddings, and how shamans use food as a communication tool with the world of spirits.

There will be companion exhibits of typical cooking utensils or serving pieces at presenting libraries throughout May. The Korean and Hmong exhibits also will include a selection of [Talking Suitcases](#)

- handmade vignettes that tell stories of immigration, personal loss and identity.

Dates and locations of programs are:

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Spice and Slice of Asia: Vietnamese Foods and Festivities

Minneapolis Central Library

Doty Board Room

Saturday, May 1, 1:30 p.m.

All Asian celebrations are centered around food. Mai Nguyen of Mai Village Restaurant will discuss some special foods connected with Vietnamese celebratory dinners, including seven beef dishes. Librarian Phuoc Tran will talk about comfort foods with lotus as their main ingredient and the symbolisms attached.

Exhibit: May 1-31

Vietnamese artifacts and traditional cooking utensils

This program is funded in part with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on Nov. 4, 2008, which dedicated funding to preserve Minnesota's art and cultural heritage.

Spice and Slice of Asia: Korean Foods and Festivities

Southdale Library

Saturday, May 8, 1:30 p.m.

All Asian celebrations are centered around food. What are some special foods connected with festivities such as birth, wedding, death and why? Staff from the Korean Service Center will present a typical kids' birthday table and describe significant birthday celebrations and foods consumed at other life-defining occasions.

Exhibit: May 1-27

Korean cooking objects and "Talking Suitcases" that focus on issues of immigration, personal loss and identity

This program is funded in part with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on Nov. 4, 2008, which dedicated funding to preserve Minnesota's art and cultural heritage.

Spice and Slice of Asia: Indian Foods and Festivities

Eden Prairie Library

Saturday, May 15, 1:30 p.m.

All Asian celebrations are centered around food. Local culinary expert and award-winning cookbook author Raghavan Iyer will weave in personal stories of foods such as whole milk creams, succulent opo squash croquettes and stewed plantains, and discuss their symbolic representation in life's cherished and poignant moments.

Exhibit, May 1-31: Indian cookbooks, cooking utensils, serving pieces

This program is funded in part with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on Nov. 4, 2008, which dedicated funding to preserve Minnesota's art and cultural heritage.

Spice and Slice of Asia: Hmong Foods and Festivities

Brookdale Library

Saturday, May 22, 1:30 p.m.

All Asian celebrations are centered around food. Hmong Culture Center representatives will discuss the role food plays in important and deeply religious Hmong ceremonies such as funerals and weddings, and how shamans use food as a communication tool with the world of spirits.

Exhibit: May 1-31

Hmong artifacts, including "Talking Suitcases" that focus on issues of immigration, personal loss

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and identity

Funding provided by a grant to the Library Foundation of Hennepin County from the Comcast Foundation.

Spice and Slice of Asia: Vietnamese Foods and Festivities

Augsburg Park Library

Sunday, May 23, 1:30 p.m.

All Asian celebrations are centered around food. Mai Nguyen of Mai Village Restaurant will discuss some special foods connected with Vietnamese celebratory dinners, including seven beef dishes. Librarian Phuoc Tran will talk about comfort foods with lotus as their main ingredient and the symbolisms attached.

Exhibit: May 1-31

Vietnamese artifacts and traditional cooking utensils

This program is funded in part with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on Nov. 4, 2008, which dedicated funding to preserve Minnesota's art and cultural heritage.

For further information contact: Chaleng Nong Lee □ Asian Outreach Liaison □ Hennepin County Library □ 952-847-5641

or Hmong Phone Line: 952-847-8828 www.hclib.org/pub/info/welcome/?language=hmong