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Delicious Detours

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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Dig Into Richmond, B.C.'s Stellar Asian Food Sæne

From dumplings to desserts, there are many reasons to add Richmond to any food-focused travel itinerary

BY DIANA BALLON

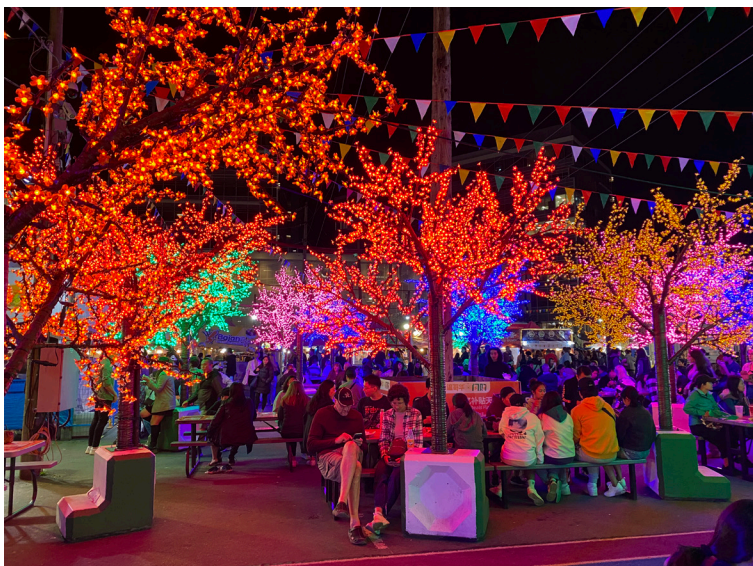
Headling to Richmond, B.C. to catch a plane from Vancouver's international airport? If you're an Asian food lover like me, then it's well worth arriving early for your flight to sample some of the most authentic dumplings, skewers and Asian desserts you can find in North America. This can be done at the Richmond Night Market (purportedly the largest night market in North America), at one of the many unassuming Richmond eateries at strip malls and food courts, or from the city's higher end restaurants.

Unbeknownst to many, more than half of Richmond's 230,000 population

are Asian—most from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China. And more than a million people flock to Richmond's Night Market each year, including a team and film crew from *Amazing Race Canada* last spring.

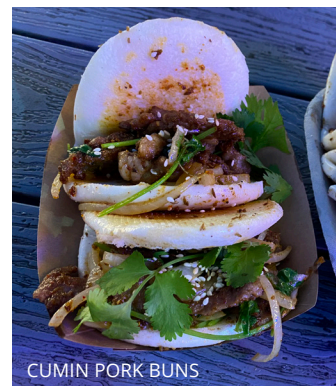
Thanks to local Asian food expert Joyce Chiang, we were able to get a curated sampling chosen from among the more than 100 food stalls at the Richmond Night Market, from eateries at the Richmond Public Market, as well as from the food court at the Aberdeen Centre.

Here are some particularly flavourful highlights.



FROM THE RICHMOND NIGHT MARKET

Try the cumin lamb buns and noodles from chef James the Xin Jiang Man (or James Chen) who, as well as working weekdays as a chef at downtown Vancouver's Fairmont Waterfront, has also run a stall at the market since 2007 featuring dishes from his home province of Xinjiang, China.



Taiwanese deep fried stinky tofu, available from the market's Taiwan Kitchen, is a classic night market item in Taiwan, says Chiang. It is a type of fermented tofu that doesn't smell great—a bit like dirty wet socks—and while some say it tastes a bit like that too, others like it for its cabbage, garlic and hot sauce filling.

Mochi donuts are trending, Chiang says, and available here at Mochido. Mochi are made from a glutinous rice flour and have a chewy texture and substantially less calories than a regular doughnut. Try their exclusive matcha (green tea) and dragon fruit lychee flavours.

Originally launched out of a tiny beach stand in White Rock, BC, Thai Affair Rolled Gelato now has a stall at the market. Watch the gelato being spread out thinly onto a flat pan and then rolled into spirals before being served to you in a cup. Their many flavours include cookies 'n cream and tiramisu.

FROM THE RICHMOND PUBLIC MARKET

Try the delicious hand-pulled noodles and spicy won tons with chili oil and garlic from Xi'an Cuisine. You can see the hand-pulled noodles being made fresh in front of you, and enjoy the unique texture of the noodles, which are silkier and slightly chewier than the shorter knife-cut version.

Another must-try stop at the market should be Hei Hei Rice Roll. The popular stall is known for their steamed rice rolls (try the beef, pork and shrimp variety), as well as for their dough sticks (or Chinese donuts). The dough sticks are a less sweet version of a doughnut, which are eaten with hot soy milk for breakfast in parts of China.



SPICY WONTONS



MATCHA AND BLACK SESAME DANGO



FROM THE FOOD COURT AT THE ABERDEEN CENTRE

The fried chicken wings at Wu Fung Dessert (which, despite its name does not specialize in dessert) are lightly floured and then deep-fried golden brown without coming out greasy. They are definitely worth the sometimes long wait to try them.

IF YOU GO

The Richmond Night Market is open on weekend evenings from May to October. Each item is about \$13, so it's best to come with a few friends to sample as many items as possible. The market also hosts dance, martial art and music performances on its main stage.

The market is located just 10 minutes by Skytrain from the airport on the Canada

Line, or about 25 minutes from downtown Vancouver, Waterfront Station. It is also only a few minutes' walk from River Rock Casino Resort.

For dumpling restaurant locations in Richmond, see dumplingtrail.com, which guides you to 15 worthwhile eateries featuring various types of dumplings—from won tons to gyoza.