# Disneyland expands Asian American cultural celebrations with Din Tai Fung and San Fransokyo Square



Rachel Chang reflects on her transformative experiences at Disneyland, noting the growing representation of Asian American culture within the park. As the daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, Chang vividly recalls how her family's trips to Disneyland offered a blend of American tradition and cultural resonance, pointing to a burgeoning inclusivity in a space historically dominated by Western narratives.

In 2017, a family visit coinciding with the Lunar New Year celebration unveiled an archway adorned with red-and-gold lanterns, signalling a deeper commitment by Disneyland to acknowledge and embrace diverse cultural backgrounds. This annual Lunar New Year festival, which has grown from a week-long event since its inception in 2012 to nearly a month-long celebration, showcases various Asian traditions. Visitors can savour a medley of culinary offerings that include Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese cuisine, alongside character interactions featuring Mickey and Minnie in traditional attire. Such experiences not only reflect global cultures but are particularly meaningful for younger generations, offering them a sense of belonging and visibility.

Recently, Chang's explorations led her to Walt Disney World in Florida, where she encountered Asian American influences manifesting in unique settings throughout the park. From a mahjong table in the lobby of The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror to collectible pins featuring characters depicted on boba drinks, changes illustrate Disney’s ongoing evolution. She returned to Disneyland for its 70th Anniversary Celebration, eager to hunt for markers of Asian American culture. Here, she found an impressive transformation in Disney California Adventure's San Fransokyo Square, a vibrant blend of San Francisco and Tokyo elements inspired by the film "Big Hero 6." This area is teeming with traditional Asian motifs, underscoring Disneyland's dedication to diversity in its narrative and aesthetic choices.

A visit to the Lucky Fortune Cookery revealed innovative menu items that celebrate Asian flavours, including honey walnut shrimp wraps and yaki udon, moving beyond the conventional theme park fare of burgers and hot dogs. The Asian influence permeates other park areas as well, evidenced by special culinary offerings celebrating Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. These include beverages featuring passion fruit-orange-guava punch alongside Green Tea Lager, demonstrating an evolving menu that resonates with a more diverse audience.

Disney’s commitment to celebrating Asian American culture culminates in its permanent addition of Din Tai Fung, which opened in July 2024 at Downtown Disney. The notion of having this renowned Taiwanese restaurant as a central dining option in a major theme park signifies a substantial cultural crossover, delighting guests like Chang who cherish these flavours from their heritage.

Behind this cultural spotlight is Compass, an employee group committed to enhancing awareness of AAPI culture within the park. Allie Kawamoto, co-chair of Compass, highlights their mission to foster understanding and appreciation among Disney Cast Members. Kawamoto's pride is palpable as she recounts creating displays that celebrate Asian American contributions, showcasing the ongoing effort to reflect the diverse backgrounds of Disneyland’s audience.

As the park continues to evolve, Chang expresses hope for an increasingly inclusive representation that resonates with visitors from various backgrounds. The expansions and events at Disneyland suggest a broader recognition of the importance of cultural narratives, paving the way for a more comprehensive and joyous engagement with the cherished memories that the park evokes in its guests.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.travelandleisure.com/asian-american-culture-at-disney-11742097), [[6]](https://disneyconnect.com/dpep/disneyland-resort-celebrates-the-year-of-the-tiger-with-the-return-of-lunar-new-year-at-disney-california-adventure-park-jan-21-to-feb-13-2022/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.travelandleisure.com/asian-american-culture-at-disney-11742097), [[2]](https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/entertainment/story/2025-01-22/lunar-new-year-2025-rises-at-disney-california-adventure-park), [[5]](https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/disneyplus-celebrates-lunar-new-year-with-visit-from-american-born-chinese-lead-at-the-disneyland-resort/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://d23.com/what-guests-can-expect-from-san-fransokyo-square-at-disney-california-adventure-park/), [[7]](https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/step-into-san-fransokyo-square-at-disney-california-adventure-park-beginning-summer-2023/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.travelandleisure.com/asian-american-culture-at-disney-11742097), [[4]](https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/a-painting-for-the-people-disney-cast-member-celebrates-beauty-and-joy-of-lunar-new-year-in-new-mural/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.travelandleisure.com/asian-american-culture-at-disney-11742097), [[3]](https://d23.com/what-guests-can-expect-from-san-fransokyo-square-at-disney-california-adventure-park/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/disneyplus-celebrates-lunar-new-year-with-visit-from-american-born-chinese-lead-at-the-disneyland-resort/), [[6]](https://disneyconnect.com/dpep/disneyland-resort-celebrates-the-year-of-the-tiger-with-the-return-of-lunar-new-year-at-disney-california-adventure-park-jan-21-to-feb-13-2022/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.travelandleisure.com/asian-american-culture-at-disney-11742097), [[7]](https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/step-into-san-fransokyo-square-at-disney-california-adventure-park-beginning-summer-2023/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.travelandleisure.com/asian-american-culture-at-disney-11742097> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/entertainment/story/2025-01-22/lunar-new-year-2025-rises-at-disney-california-adventure-park> - The Los Angeles Times reports on Disney California Adventure Park's Lunar New Year celebrations, highlighting the Year of the Snake festivities. The event honours Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean traditions, featuring Mulan's Lunar New Year Procession, live music performances, and special preshows like 'Hurry Home – A Lunar New Year Celebration.' The park offers a variety of cultural experiences, including traditional dances, drumming, and culinary delights, providing guests with an immersive cultural experience during the festive period.
3. <https://d23.com/what-guests-can-expect-from-san-fransokyo-square-at-disney-california-adventure-park/> - D23 provides an overview of San Fransokyo Square, Disney California Adventure Park's newest themed land opening on August 31, 2023. Inspired by the film 'Big Hero 6,' the area blends San Francisco and Tokyo elements, featuring landmarks like the 54-foot San Fransokyo Gate Bridge and a koi fish turbine. The land offers diverse dining options, including Aunt Cass Café, serving Japanese-inspired cuisine, and the Port of San Fransokyo Cervecería, reflecting the area's tri-cultural influences.
4. <https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/a-painting-for-the-people-disney-cast-member-celebrates-beauty-and-joy-of-lunar-new-year-in-new-mural/> - Disney Parks Blog highlights a new mural in Downtown Disney District, created by cast member Lisa Kang to commemorate the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Tiger. Drawing inspiration from traditional Korean minwha art, the mural depicts a vibrant scene of the Lunar New Year celebration at Disney California Adventure Park, featuring dancers, characters like Tigger, and marketplace booths, aiming to celebrate and share the beauty of the Lunar New Year with guests.
5. <https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/disneyplus-celebrates-lunar-new-year-with-visit-from-american-born-chinese-lead-at-the-disneyland-resort/> - Disney Parks Blog reports on actor Ben Wang's visit to Disneyland Resort to celebrate Lunar New Year at Disney California Adventure Park. Wang, star of the Disney+ series 'American Born Chinese,' joined festivities that honoured Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean cultures, including vibrant cultural décor, live performances, and character appearances, providing guests with a rich cultural experience during the festive period.
6. <https://disneyconnect.com/dpep/disneyland-resort-celebrates-the-year-of-the-tiger-with-the-return-of-lunar-new-year-at-disney-california-adventure-park-jan-21-to-feb-13-2022/> - Disneyland Resort's official press release details the return of Lunar New Year celebrations at Disney California Adventure Park from January 21 to February 13, 2022. The event features four festive Lunar New Year Marketplaces offering Asian-inspired dishes with a Disney twist, live performances showcasing traditional musical instruments and folk dances, and special merchandise, providing guests with a multicultural celebration of the Year of the Tiger.
7. <https://disneyparksblog.com/disney-experiences/step-into-san-fransokyo-square-at-disney-california-adventure-park-beginning-summer-2023/> - Disney Parks Blog introduces San Fransokyo Square, a new themed land at Disney California Adventure Park opening in summer 2023. Inspired by the film 'Big Hero 6,' the area features landmarks like the San Fransokyo Gate Bridge and a koi fish turbine, offering guests a unique blend of San Francisco and Tokyo elements, with dining options such as Aunt Cass Café serving Japanese-inspired cuisine.