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The Year of the Ox

Celebrating Chinese New Year



By Gabriel Barrios

A holiday filled with myths, beasts, and dynasties. A holiday filled with culture, festivals, and family. A holiday that has taken place since the B.C. era, and is the most important of all the traditional Chinese festivals. And a holiday that the whole world should know about. Throughout the years, Chinese New Year (or Lunar New Year because it follows the lunar calendar) has changed drastically. “The observance of this holiday dates back to 3,500 years ago!”, says Julie Chou Estrada, a 46-year-old homeschool mom, who was born in Taipei, Taiwan, immigrated to California when she was 7 years old, and has celebrated Lunar New Year her entire life.

Like all of the traditional festivals in China, Lunar New Year is filled with myths and stories. One of the most popular is the story of the Nian, (or ‘Yearly Beast’). Nian was a mythical beast that ate crops, animals, and people on the eve of a new year. It is claimed that a wise old man figured out Nian’s weaknesses, which were loud noises and the color red. That is why people that celebrate Lunar New Year hang red drapes over their windows and doors—to keep Nian from coming inside. Even though Lunar New Year can only be tracked back to about 1,600 B.C., the holiday has been going on for even longer than that.

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It is believed among some that Lunar New Year began with the Shang Dynasty. The Dynasties of China went in this order: Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han, Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing. At first Lunar New Year was a religious holiday with the people of China making sacrifices to Gods and ancestors in order to bless the harvest for a new year.

Over time, Lunar New Year became less religious and more social. Families would get together to clean the house, have dinner together, and stay up late on the Eve of the New Year. "Before the banquet, we do 'Spring Cleaning'! Basically, a thorough 'reset' of all aspects of life for a fresh start," says Estrada. "Clean your room (kids), or help clean the house. Get a new haircut, wear a new outfit to the banquet, tidy garden, pay off any debts owed. Sweep out the bad/old energy, make room for the new." The activities of Lunar New Year started to look more like the ones that are practiced today. Visiting friends and relatives, setting off firecrackers, and having dumplings together became important traditions of Lunar New Year. Lion and Dragon dances and lantern festivals became important traditions as well. When the Qing Dynasty eventually fell, the modern, communist government of China that we see today stepped in.

Although many of the traditional festivals are lost today, they are replaced by new ones, including CCTV (China Central Television), Festival Gala, Shopping Online, Overseas Travel, and WeChat red envelopes. But one of the things that is still around today, is the Chinese Zodiac.

The zodiacs are based on the year you were born. Many myths explain the zodiacs, but the one that has been



around for years is The Great Race. The Great Race starts with Jade Emperor, the emperor of the heavens. Jade Emperor wanted to find a way to measure time. He created a race, and the first 12 animals to cross the finish line (the other side of the river) would be on the calendar, in the specific order that they had crossed. The Rat woke up when the sun rose in order to get an early start. As he crawled to the river crossing he walked into the Tiger, Horse, and Ox. Since the Rat was small and was not the best swimmer, he asked if one of the bigger animals could help him. The Horse and the Tiger refused, but the Ox agreed to carry the Rat across the river. As they were nearing the finish line, the Rat jumped off the Ox and made first place. The Ox got out of the river and secured

second place. Next came the Tiger, and then the Rabbit. The Dragon came in fifth place. Even though she could have flown all the way across, she had stopped to help some animals on the way. Then the Horse came along, about to reach sixth place, but suddenly the snake crept past, and the horse, who reared back in fright, got seventh place. The Monkey, Sheep, and Rooster, were all floating across on a raft. When they hit dry land, they agreed that the Sheep, who had been the most comforting of the three, deserved eighth place, followed by the Monkey, then the Rooster. The Dog was a great swimmer, but he had been in the water for so long that he came in eleventh place. Because he had been eating and sleeping for so long, the Pig came in last place.

Each one of the animals is used for a different year. 2021 is the year of the Ox and will last for 16 days. The cycle is repeated every 60 years. In the Chinese Zodiac, you can also have a secret animal based on your birth hour, a true animal based on your birth date, and an inner animal based on your birth month. "I'm a real life Tiger Mom!", says Estrada, whose sign is the Tiger.

Aside from China, other countries that celebrate Lunar New Year include Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea (North and South), Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Taiwan. The major U.S. cities that celebrate Lunar New Year are Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Honolulu, and New York City. New York City has one of the biggest Lunar New Year celebrations in the US. Some of the festivities include a parade, fireworks and martial arts, and food vendors who sell traditional Lunar Year food. However, because of COVID-19, most festivities have become virtual. The Museum of Chinese in America will be hosting a virtual festival that will have many different events.

"Lunar New Year is celebrated by millions around the world each year. It is as old as humans looking up at the sky and observing nature and the changing of the seasons for harvest and life." says Estrada. It is celebrated by a sixth of the world's population. No matter where people are, no matter where they are from or what their beliefs are, they should know about this culture, and where it originated from. The world is beautifully filled with cultures, stories, and traditions. "As for our family," says Estrada, "I feel it is very important to share our culture heritage, whatever it is, with our children as stories are passed from generation to generation. Stories are our human fabric that connect us. When we are gone, our stories remain."



National Peanut Butter Lover's Day by Norah Jensen

Americans eat enough of it every year to coat the floor of the Grand Canyon. It can be used to clean leather or remove gum from your hair. And some people might even use it to lubricate their lawn mower blades. It's an American obsession, and on March 1st, we celebrate it with National Peanut Butter Lover's Day.

"I like peanut butter in almost every way. With chocolate, by itself on a spoon, inside a cake, on a sandwich, and in many other ways," says homeschool dad and peanut butter lover Andrew Jensen.

Peanut butter shows up in food products and pantries across America, but it's not exactly brand new. In fact, the people that first made peanut butter were the natives of Mexico, the Incas and Aztecs. They used to roast the nuts and mash them into a paste. Vegetable oil was added later. Then, after the invention of modern mixing machines, peanut butter got the smooth texture we know today.

Many believe that George Washington Carver invented the product known as peanut butter, because he was one of the greatest inventors in American history. He discovered over 300 hundred uses for peanuts including chili sauce, shampoo, shaving cream, glue, flour, paste, insulation, paper, wall board, wood stains, soap, and skin lotion. He experimented with medicines made from peanuts, which included antiseptics, laxatives and a treatment for goiter.

But he did not invent peanut butter.

Instead, in 1884, Marcellus Gilmore Edson, a Canadian pharmacist and chemist, patented a way to make peanut paste, an early version of





peanut butter. He developed the idea of peanut paste as a nutritious product for people who could hardly chew solid food. People in the 1800s often had bad teeth or diseases that made it hard to chew food. The patent describes a process of milling roasted peanuts until the peanuts reach a fluid state. But peanut butter still wasn't something enjoyed by the masses. That transition would involve a man named Dr. John Harvey Kellogg.

Dr. Kellogg was a medical doctor, inventor, nutritionist, businessman, and author. Kellogg made peanut butter from raw peanuts rather than roasted. He marketed peanut butter widely as a healthy alternative protein source for vegetarians (as he was one himself) and also for elderly toothless patients, who could not chew meat. He certainly did not invent peanut butter, but he

popularized it as a healthy food.

Despite its flavor, nutritional value, the fact that a Canadian patented it, and its apparently many practical uses, peanut butter seems to be a largely American food. Americans consume over 700 million pounds of peanut butter every year. That's about two pounds of peanut butter per person, and 800 million dollars' worth. Meanwhile, the average European eats about one tablespoon of peanut butter a year. Peanut butter is so common in the United States, that there is even a phobia, arachibutyrophobia (ara-ki-bi-uti-ro-phobia), the fear of getting peanut butter stuck to the roof of your mouth. And it just so happens that two of our presidents were peanut farmers: Thomas Jefferson, and Jimmy Carter.

Peanut butter's popularity grew after World War I, World War II, and The Great Depression, when Americans looked for cheap and common food. And there was peanut butter, inexpensive and packed with nutritional value, thanks to Kellogg's work. But the biggest reason peanut remains popular among its biggest fans is that the flavor and texture are unbeatable. "It's

delicious and creamy and it leaves a very satisfying taste in the back of my mouth," says 12-year-old homeschooler Zenobia Rivetti. "I eat peanut butter at least three times a week."

People from other countries don't always agree. "Putting nuts on bread was bizarre for us," says homeschool mom Natalie Solomonov, who immigrated to the United States from Russia 16 years ago. "It is a very foreign thing."

To take peanuts and turn them into the opposite of their texture is curious to most people outside the United States. "It is not part of our culture," says Helga Olave, a mom who immigrated from Colombia 21 years ago. "It is nearly impossible to find peanut butter in other countries, and it's extremely expensive."

Even so, people all over the world know that it's a way of life in the United States. "Before moving to America," says Solomonov, "I tried to train myself to like peanut butter. It was a very American thing, to like peanut butter." But liking it is a challenge for many who didn't grow up with it on their fingers. According to Olave, "It's gooey,



smelly, salty, and messy.”

There are many types of peanut butter, such as crunchy, creamy, and natural. Opinions on it are strong, as is its smell, which some find off-putting. “The peanut butter is salty,” says Solomonov. It is true. There are 80 milligrams of sodium in an eighteen ounce jar of peanut butter.

In addition to its nutritional profile, peanut butter can also be financially valuable. Extracting the oxygen from the carbon dioxide leaves a carbon that, under the right pressure, can turn peanut butter into diamonds. (This type of work must be used with very specific, very expensive tools).

But ordinary people can access peanut butter’s richness as well. For example, girls between the ages of nine and fifteen that regularly eat peanut butter are 39% less likely to develop certain cancers by 30.

Peanut butter has even helped the pandemic. One of the symptoms of Covid-19 is smell and taste loss. One of the ways scientists identify this symptom is by giving people the chance to smell or taste a food that was common and in almost every household. That food was peanut butter.

Despite its highly controversial nature, clearly this little legume packs a punch in terms of taste, nutrition, and a variety of practical uses. Whether inside a Reese’s peanut butter cup, between two slices of bread with grape jelly, or alone on a spoon, March 1st invites you to enjoy this most American treat.

A Steady Pattern of Success

by Lottie Probst

The name “Kamala” comes from Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity and success, which makes it a fitting label for our new Vice President, Kamala Harris. When she was just 13 years old, Harris and her younger sister led a demonstration outside their Montreal apartment building in protest of the fact that children were not allowed to play on the lawn. Having achieved her goal, Harris was well on her way toward



what would turn out to be a long and successful career in public service.

Harris’s mother was Indian and her father was Jamaican. Growing up, she and her sister Maya attended both a Hindu temple and a Baptist church. In addition to religion, her parents were very passionate about civil rights, and took their girls to many protests. In first grade, young Kamala was bused to Thousand Oaks Elementary as part of Berkeley, California’s desegregation program. When she was seven, her mother and father

divorced. When Harris was 13, her mom got a job as a cancer researcher at Jewish General Hospital and the family moved to Montreal, Canada, where Kamala completed middle school and high school. Then she moved to Washington, DC, to attend Howard University.

Nina Watson, a 13-year-old student at Different Directions, says, “When I found out that she went to Howard I started looking more into HBCUs. Now my dream college at the moment is Howard.” (HBCUs stands for historically black college and universities.) Upon graduating from Howard, Harris went back to California, where she moved in with her sister and went to U.C Hastings College of Law.

After law school, in 1990, Harris started working at the Alameda County prosecutor’s office as Deputy District Attorney focusing on sex crimes. She started working for the district attorney office of San Francisco, then in 2003, in a race against her former boss Terrence Hallinan, she was elected District Attorney. While serving as district attorney, Harris launched a project called “Back on Track”. It helped young adults who went to prison for smaller charges get job training and other educational programs.

In 2010 Harris became California’s attorney general after beating Steve Cooley. She was the first African American and the first woman to have this position. Throughout Harris’s career as District Attorney and then Attorney General it seems she was in favor of abolishing the death penalty, however, she declined to support two initiatives that would do so in California. Her inconsistency raised questions among many. Harris made an impact when she didn’t sign a deal for 4 billion dollars in a national

mortgage settlement, in an effort to have more money for the deal. It was successful and she negotiated 20 billion dollars. People criticized her silence about police brutality, but over the course of 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement, some say she did more to speak up about it.

At one point it was rumored that Harris might be a nominee for the Supreme Court, but she said she wasn't interested. In 2016 she became the first South Asian American Senator after winning against Loretta Sanchez. In 2017 Harris hit the national scene after her 3 ½ minutes of sharp questioning of U.S. Attorney General Jeff Session. Sessions said that being questioned that fast made him very nervous. She used this strategy again with Brett Kavanaugh, when questioning him at his Supreme Court confirmation hearings. In January of 2019, Harris announced that she would be running for President. Unfortunately, in December of that year she had to drop out of the presidential race due to a lack of funding. In March of 2020 she endorsed Joe Biden for the democratic nominee and on August 11, Biden announced her as his running mate.

On a sunny Saturday morning in New York City we found out that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris had won the election. People were in the streets playing "Party in the U.S.A" by Miley Cyrus, driving their cars with Biden 2020 signs, and cheering. On January 20, 2021, Kamala Harris was sworn into office. She made history by being the



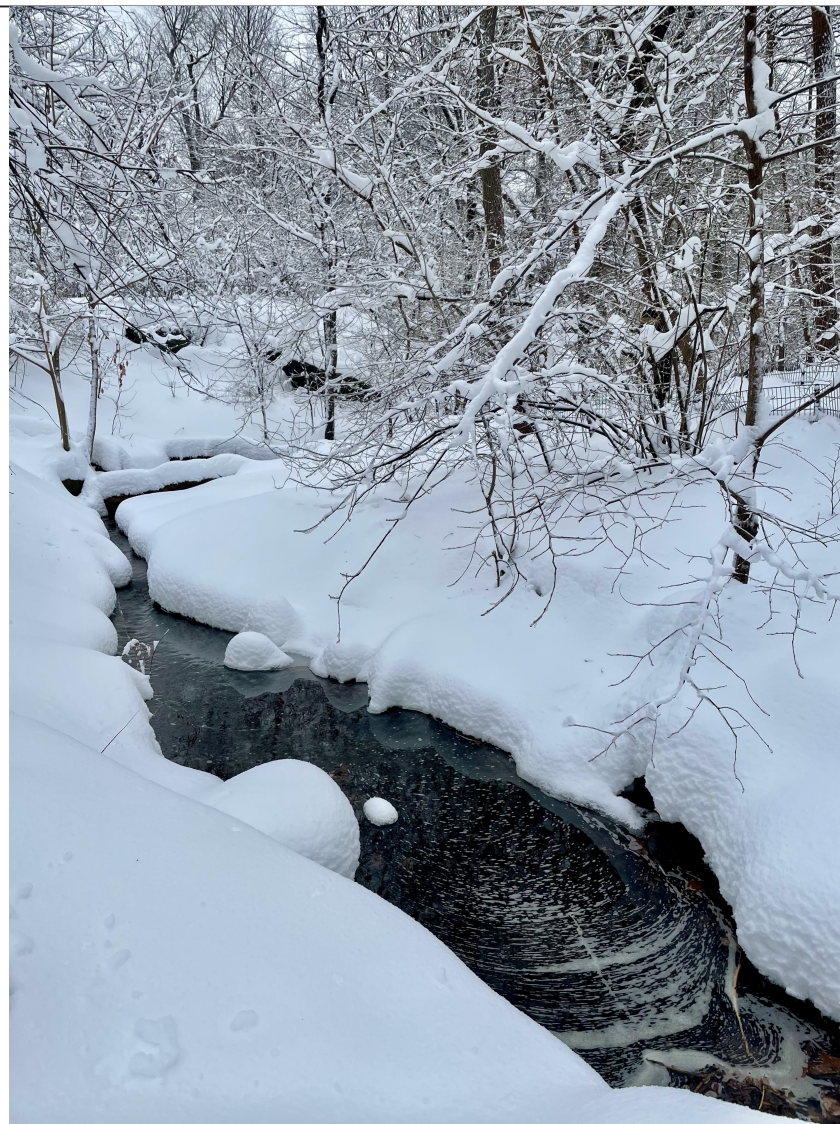
the first South Asian person to be Vice President of the United States. Abby Shivaram, a homeschool student whose family is from Tamil Nadu, the state in India where Vice President Harris's family is from, said of Harris's inauguration, "I feel elated, proud, and inspired that she is VP of the United States."

"I admire a lot about her," said Watson. "She didn't grow up from a lot, and now she's made these great moments in history. She changed history and that's pretty cool". From successfully protesting so she and friends could play on the lawn outside her building to her remarkable professional achievements, she really has lived up to her name.

Fighting Off the Winter Blues by Nina Watson

Winter. At first it can be full of holiday joy, hopes for the first snow, and cozy treats, but as the months drag on and on and on it becomes a dull and repetitive drag. Almost everyone has experienced it. Dark weather and short days affect our moods, while school work piles up. By the time mid-January hits I'm already done and ready to move onto summer break, not even a full month into winter. Of course, all of this doesn't mean you can never enjoy winter, it's just about finding ways to keep the good parts all winter long.

There are many ways that you can feel good throughout the season. Some simple self-care and lifestyle changes (which is not as scary as it sounds) can



help you through the dark times of winter.

1. Cook new and healthy foods

Cooking is a calming and fun activity. There is practically an infinite number of recipes you can find online, in books, or from just asking a friend or family member what their favorite dish is. Cooking can brighten a mood, making us feel accomplished and leaving something delicious behind. It is also a very useful skill and is essential to a healthy diet. So bake some lemon bars or give your parents a break from making dinner.

2. Keep your work and space organized

This is definitely one of the most daunting ways to help with your mental health but one of the most productive. I



am no stranger to piles of assignments on my computer and piles of clothes on my bedroom floor, but whenever I clean my room and finish my assignments early I feel so much calmer. My room can be pretty hectic (just ask my mom), and cleaning up seems like a huge task, so try focusing on just one thing at a time when you clean. You can do the same step by step method with homework as well.

3. Stay hydrated

Dry throats are a given with winter, and drinking water wards off headaches and prevents irritability. Keeping your body healthy and hydrated will help with your mood, too. Try to aim for eight cups a day. If you rarely feel thirsty then that is a good sign you are drinking enough water every day.

4. Make time for friends and family

No one has forgotten that we are currently in a pandemic, which we all know can be a detriment to mental and physical health, but surrounding yourself (virtually of course) with friends and family can boost your mood and give you something to look forward to. Sometimes we like to just be alone, watching tv, reading a book, etc, and that is perfectly okay, but we can't forget to make time for those we care about. Playing a video game with friends, having a trivia night on Zoom, or just video calling a family member to check in keeps relationships strong

and is fun. Reaching out to friends and family regularly will not only brighten your day but theirs too.

5. Try meditation

Often when we think about meditation we imagine sitting on a yoga mat for hours and unlocking a part of our brain to expand our knowledge of the universe, but meditation can really just be sitting down for five minutes and focusing on your breathing. Sit down in a comfy chair or lay down on your bed and focus on breathing, positive affirmations, and just being calm. Taking a few minutes to ourselves to calm down, especially when stressed, can help us be focused and positive during dark days.

6. Take time to exercise

Another supposedly daunting task that has a great payoff is physical activity. We all know that exercise keeps our bodies healthy and active, but it is also great for mental health. Think about how accomplished you feel after you work out. Even if I do nothing else all day but I work out, I know I did something good for myself. Working out 30-40 minutes every day is ideal, but even just doing a 15-minute workout video a few times a week or going on a walk in the park (with a mask of course) is something easy you can do for yourself.

7. Go outside

Leaving the house right now is something that most people find to be



an inconvenience and risk with the cold weather, and of course, the pandemic. But going outdoors is crucial to mental and physical health. Getting sunlight exposure is a necessity for us. When we go outside, the sunlight increases serotonin levels, a mood-boosting hormone in our brains. When we don't get enough sun exposure the serotonin in our brains dips, affecting our mood and energy. During the winter we always want to be inside to avoid the cold weather, so we do not get enough sunlight, which can be a leading cause of seasonal depression. Going outside for just 20 minutes can lower stress levels and increase serotonin, which can be one of the best things you can do for yourself during winter.

These are just some tips for keeping a happy and healthy body and mind during winter. These things can make a big difference for many people with typical winter blues, but sadly it can be more severe for some people. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that comes with a change in seasons, most commonly winter. Four to six percent of people suffer from SAD, most over the age of 20, and it is four times more common in women than men. If your symptoms feel more serious than just "winter blues," talk to your parents and doctor to seek help.



Escape from the City

by Emma Ledesma

For years I heard of a resort in the Poconos called Camelback, which contains Aquatopia, an indoor waterpark filled with huge water slides, a flow rider, and a lazy river. The resort even has an arcade! I was thrilled when both my mother and sister told me we were going there to celebrate my 14th birthday. Before we arrived at Camelback, we drove to a dinner and ate soft fluffy blueberry pancakes for breakfast. It was so nice to eat out even during Covid-19.

Once we arrived there, I thought I was in a dream. I ran inside to look out the resort window, and saw the most incredible waterpark I had ever seen.

After we changed into our swimsuits, we stepped into Aquatopia with its warm, artificial sun and 70-degree weather. Outside it was about 30-degrees, so the warmth felt very refreshing. I especially loved the historical theme, with its shimmering caves, statues, notes for the explorers, and lots of stars. There was a section of astronomy near one of the slides which I really enjoyed. Next up, was the storm chaser water slide. My sister and I love fast tube slides, so she and I rode it together. It was fast and fun and the water splashed all over us from every direction!

Next I went on the flow rider and I jumped on to the waves. Bang! My stomach slapped right on the wave and my back hit the wall. Splash! The water flew onto my face, and I once again jumped on the wave, and fell off the board and my back hit the wall again. It



was fun but terrifying to fall off the board. Then I went on one of my favorite rides, the lazy river, and floated through the relaxing jungle scenes with beautiful paintings and glowing caves.

The lazy river was very relaxing as I floated on my soft blue inner tube. The water softly rushed under my feet as I floated on the blue ocean-like water. The ride had glowing statues, tropical paintings, and vibrant colors. The submarine was also really cool, because when you stand under it you get splashed with cold water. The wave pool features an Antarctica theme with little penguins and white and blue walls. Your eyes are drawn in when you go there.

Camelback's arcade contains a huge variety of games. It also has activities like rock-climbing, an escape room, bumper cars, and arcade games. I did the escape room with my sister, and it was medieval themed. It asked riddles and had glowing crystals to help us find escape. I especially liked finding

the different objects hidden behind the medieval maps.

The arcade also has bumper cars. My sister and I quickly rammed into each other like bulls at full speed! Bumping into other people is really fun when you're doing it with your sister. We also climbed the rock wall. When the timer started ticking we started trekking like we were going up Mount Everest. My sister and I were neck and neck, and I continued up until I finally reached the buzzer! I had beaten my sister and climbed up that huge wall, and then I flew down and fell on a soft cushion under me.

After my trip to Camelback, my energy was restored, and I was ready to return to winter in the city. It was one of my best birthdays ever.

COVID is Rough, But At Least We Have Food!

by Nina Watson

Whipped coffee, cloud bread, mini pancake cereal, and white bread cinnamon Nutella rolls. These are just some food trends that have taken TikTok by storm during the pandemic.

Staying at home can be pretty boring. I'm sure we've all figured this out by now and tried plenty of ways to remedy the situation, from binge-watching the latest Netflix shows to scrolling through TikTok for hours. If you've been on social media at all in the past few months you've probably seen at least one intriguing trending food.

But these foods aren't always as delicious as they may seem online. "I tried making cloud bread and it's literally just egg and sugar. It's not good. It didn't even rise," says Sophia Ghadimi, a NYC homeschooled teen. "Usually none of the food trends actually taste good," adds 13-year-old homeschooler Lottie Probst. It's always disappointing when you have been excited to try a new recipe and then it turns out bad or even just okay, and with the added hype of it from the internet it makes your hopes even higher. Of course, opinions of the food differ from person to person. When asked how they feel about whipped coffee, a trend from the beginning of quarantine that involves whipping instant coffee until fluffy, the responses were completely



Cloud bread



Whipped coffee

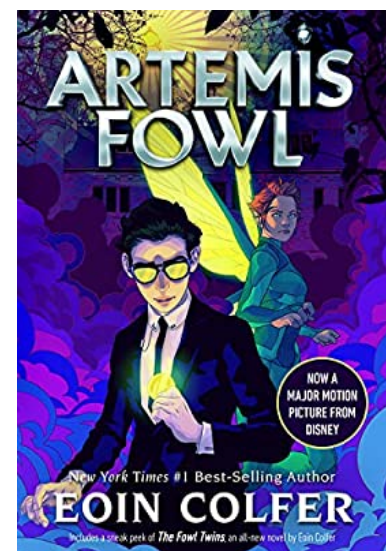
contrasting, one saying it was delicious and another saying it was absolutely disgusting.

Some of the trends are more nutritious than others. Acai bowls, an on and off again trend across multiple platforms as a dessert or breakfast, prioritize health by packing as many nutrients as possible into one dish. One of the latest, a baked feta cheese and tomato pasta, went viral for its aesthetically pleasing look, its simplicity to cook, and its nutritional value. Mabel Benton, a 14-year-old homeschool student described the pasta as “Good but not spectacular,” which seems to fall into the theme of disappointing internet foods. But less viral foods that you will see in mini clickbait videos, mostly on Instagram, tend to live on the unhealthy side. Short clips, many faked to make fun “food hack” videos, use the shock value of bacon-wrapped deep-fried everything, or layers upon layers of different desserts on top of each other to create a pastry Frankenstein cake.

Of course, nutrition isn’t usually the main point with pandemic food trends. Most of these fads were used as fun and (usually) productive distractions for boredom during lockdown, or relaxation in stressful times. They also provide community amongst people across the internet. “Because we don’t really have a lot to do and it’s just online classes and stuff and we’re in quarantine, these trends have been a nice way to find things to do collectively even if it’s not a group activity. We’re all trying the trends so it’s really fun to see someone do it and then you try it. Even if you don’t know the person, you might see a famous person or someone else do it, and you try it and you’re like, oh this is cool,” says Probst about why these food trends are so compelling to do.

Pandemic food trends are usually pretty specific to social media, but plenty of people started baking and cooking more during lockdown as well. Probst says some of her favorite new foods from quarantine were the baked desserts and breads her mom made.

So, why not go into your kitchen and try one of these recipes out! The worst that can happen is it tastes bad. All in all, food trends are dependent on the person’s perspective/interests. They don’t need to be productive or delicious. Sometimes they can just be fun.



Book Review: Artemis Fowl by Norah Jensen

“And if history had taught any lessons, it was that humans couldn’t get along with anyone, even themselves.”

Artemis Fowl is the son of the original criminal mastermind, Artemis Fowl. Artemis chooses to follow in his father’s criminal footsteps, and is a super genius himself. He lives in Dublin, Ireland, in Fowl Manor (a place left behind by his father). At only twelve years old, Artemis is searching for a community, hidden in the depths of earth. Fairies, goblins, dwarves, trolls, centaurs, and other mythical creatures live there, and have triumphed by means of civilization and technology well past what humanity has built. Artemis succeeds in capturing a fairy named Captain Holly Short and black mails the head of the LEPrecon unit for exactly 24 carat gold, which he

intends to use for his mother. In Eoin Colfer's underground civilization of mythical creatures, with magic that seems much more dangerous than your average fairy tale, will Artemis outsmart everyone or be outsmarted in turn? And what about his parents?

Even though he is only 12 years old, he is much smarter and wealthier than the average man. That, combined with the technology that is far more advanced than ours, adds to the fantastical world Colfer has created. Even so, all of these elements work according to the rules of that world. Humor and sarcasm play a strong role in the novel, which keeps the reader entertained and relieves the tension at all the right moments. Colfer's descriptions are enough to immerse us in Artemis's world, but not so much that they slow down the story. He keeps the book moving along, and combines sci-fi, adventure, and fantasy into an action-packed novel.

This book is more plot-driven than character-driven, so sometimes it feels like the characters could be better developed. For example, we don't learn very much about Butler's backstory, even though he's one of the main characters. And Artemis is understandably closed off because of his mother's mental illness and his father's disappearance. Ultimately I found it hard to decode those two characters' personalities, but I really connected with Holly. She's witty, opinionated, and strong.

Overall, this is a gripping story that had me so engaged that I finished it in one day. Each chapter ends with a cliffhanger, and I just couldn't stop turning the pages. I was constantly blown away by the intelligence and wit of Artemis Fowl. I recommend this for everyone, age 10 and up, especially readers with a passion for adventure, fantasy, and sci-fi.



Restaurant Review: Hamilton Hall

by Emma Ledesma

On a cold January night, my family went to a recently opened and eye-catching restaurant named Hamilton Hall. Due to Covid-19, we made a reservation in advance to sit in their cozy outdoor booths, but glimpse into the interior showed that it is welcoming and decorated with photos of Alexander Hamilton. We especially enjoyed the red, white, and blue mini booths. Outside, small heaters kept us toasty and barriers around the booths kept us safe.

I scrolled through the menu, looking for a delicious meal and drink that was new and delicious. Our server, Mickey, who happened to be the owner, was very nice and funny. He made sure we enjoyed every minute of our stay. I got a delicious hot chocolate that was warm and silky in my mouth. Then, we ordered the food. My mother and I ordered the

pan seared chicken; my father and sister ordered the fried chicken sandwich.

The food arrived in only about ten minutes, so the service is great. The light orange, gravy covered piece of chicken was so gorgeous. I immediately wanted a photo of this heavenly piece of chicken. As soon as I took a bite, I was in heaven. The chicken was soft and savory seasoned with spiced honey on top of soft spiced honey flavored mashed potatoes with soft gravy covered brussels sprouts which tasted very good. The brussel sprouts had spiced honey as well which gave them a smooth delectable taste along with small pieces of bacon. I loved eating that tasty meal. My sister's burger also had tasty toppings such as, boneless fried chicken thigh, hot honey, red cabbage slaw on a toasted bun. My sister enjoyed her meal as well as the rest of my family.

After our meal, we played music from the musical Hamilton and spoke to Mickey for a bit. He explained that he saw the play and enjoyed it. He is Irish

and grew up in Ireland. Then my dad and I explored the inside, which gives the restaurant a historic feel. I felt like I was in the year 1700. I especially enjoyed taking photos of the historic figure Alexander Hamilton.

Hamilton Hall's outdoor booths are booked often so be sure to make a reservation for a booth. Dress is casual. The food is a bit pricy, but worth it. With the bright lights and cozy booths, this restaurant draws you in. If you are hosting a young adult get together or are a fan of the musical Hamilton this is the perfect place to go.

Get involved with the DD Compass Monthly!

If you are a homeschooler in New York City (or anywhere else, since everything is virtual these days), we invite you to get involved with our student newspaper in any of the following ways:

1. Do you know a homeschooler (including yourself) who has an interesting or unusual hobby, skill, or perspective? If you so, our journalists might be interested in writing a profile about them/you. Email me with inquiries.
2. Submit your original art work for our Arts section.
3. Interview with our student journalists for a future issue of the Compass. Each month I send out a call for interview sources who have experience with or insight into the topics we are covering in our next issue. Parents count, too! Keep an eye out for that email. We look forward to hearing from you.
4. Join the newspaper staff! After completing one trimester of Journalism I at Different Directions, you are invited to join our newspaper staff. Spring classes begin at the end of March.

Thank you for reading the DD Compass Monthly. Our student journalists seek to produce quality content that is relevant and interesting to the New York City homeschool community. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how best to accomplish this goal. Please send all inquiries and feedback to me at rivettijensen@gmail.com.

Cheers,

Adrienne Jensen
Newspaper Adviser