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Richmond, British Columbia: North America's most Chinese city

Naomi Tomky, CNN • Updated 14th February 2018



(CNN) — A trip to eat the world's best dumplings might be shorter than expected for those in North America: Forget Shanghai and head to Richmond, British Columbia, a bustling suburb of Vancouver and the [most Chinese city in on the continent](#).

Home to Vancouver International Airport and a short Sky Train (rapid transit) ride from downtown, it makes for an easy stop on the way in or out of the city -- whether just for lunch or for a weekend of Chinese-Canadian cultural immersion.

What to eat and drink

You don't need to know your xiao long bao (steamed soup dumplings) from your sheng jian bao (fried soup buns) to participate in one of Richmond's greatest debates: Who has the best soup dumplings?

Find infinite versions of the tender-skinned purses filled with rich pork broth and meat at local favorites, starting with the classic Chen's Shanghai Kitchen and the more upscale Suhang.

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For a more intensive dumpling dive, sit down for dim sum at Chef Tony Seafood Restaurant. The mushroom specialist brings a touch of luxury to the tea-and-snacks meal, serving har gow (shrimp purses) with matsutake mushrooms, abalone on fried taro, and truffle-studded everything. In the nearby Aberdeen Centre, the same chef puts out more standard versions -- but equally high-quality -- at Fisherman's Terrace (arrive early or be prepared to wait).

Richmond's world-class cuisine goes way beyond dumplings, bringing regional specialties from every corner of China to new audiences and those craving a taste of home.

Silkway Halal Cuisine prepares Muslim Chinese specialties from Xinjiang, a far western province, including sesame pocket breads for stuffing lamb into and wide hand-pulled noodles swimming in the silky juices of braised chicken.

O'Tray, a booth inside President Plaza, turns out snacks from Tianjin, a northern Chinese city, including the savory doughnut-wrapped pancake called jian bing.

Complete the tour by popping into the parking garage of a Canadian Superstore to pick up roast pork from HK BBQ Master, a rendition of the simple, common dish, so much crispier and more flavorful than any other that the lines stretch down the block.

Wash it all down with a drink from one of the more than 75 bubble tea restaurants that dot the town.

Chen's Shanghai Kitchen, 8095 Park Rd, Richmond, 604-304-8288

Suhang Restaurant, 8291 Ackroyd Rd #100, Richmond, 604-278-7787

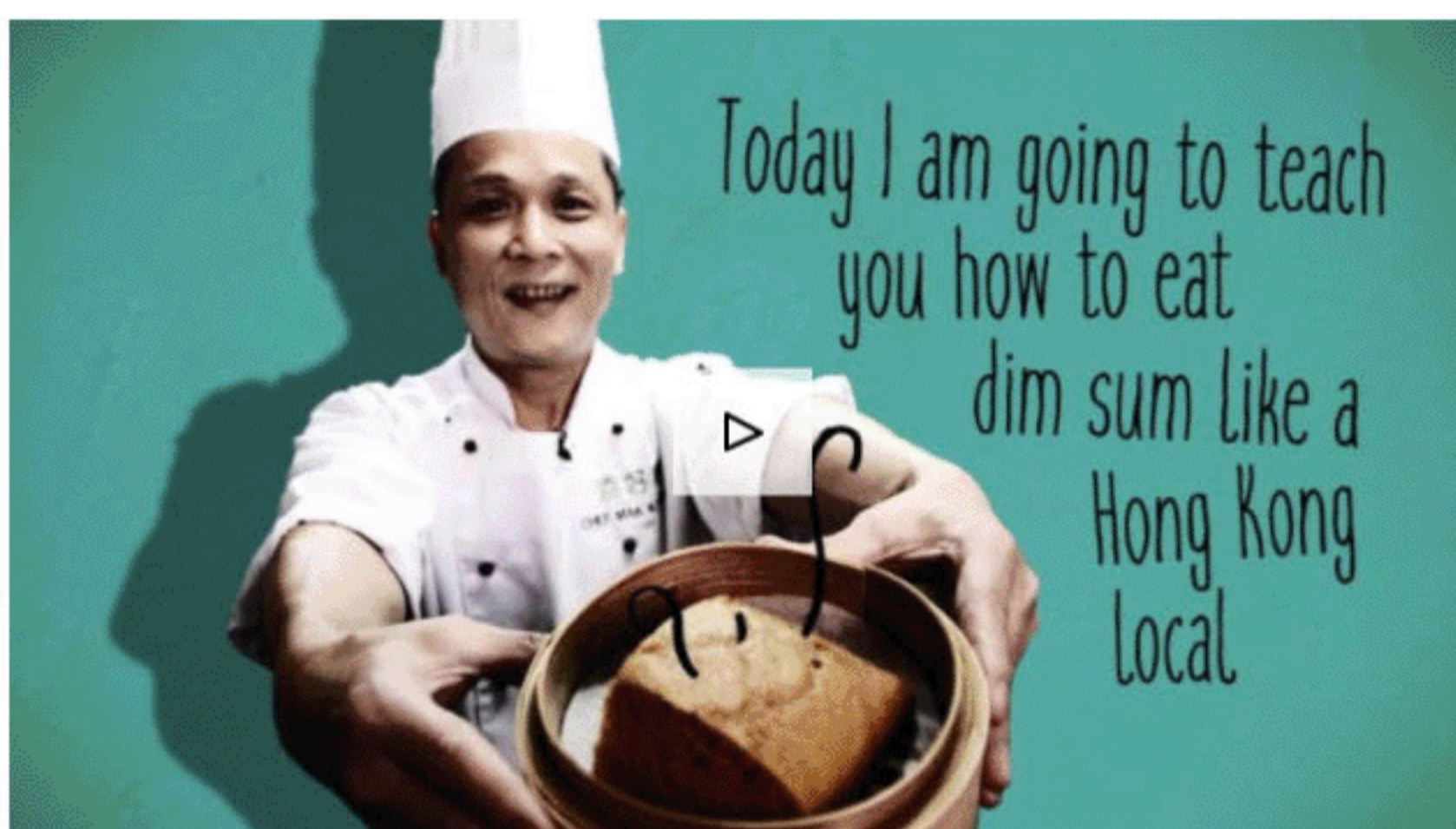
Chef Tony Seafood Restaurant, 4600 No 3 Rd #101, Richmond, 604-279-0083

Fisherman's Terrace Restaurant, 4151 Hazelbridge Way, Richmond, 604-303-9739

Silkway Halal Cuisine, 8188 Saba Rd #110, Richmond, 604-278-6788

O'Tray Noodle, 8181 Cambie Rd, Richmond, 778-829-7519

HK BBQ Master, 4651 No 3 Rd, Richmond, 604-272-6568



Chef Mak Kwai Pui, owner of Hong Kong's most famous dim sum restaurant, shares a few essential dining tips.

What to do

While the most popular activity for visitors to Richmond might simply be eating, sometimes people need a break to work up an appetite and the Richmond Olympic Oval has 20,000 square feet of ways to do so.

Built for the speed-skating events at the 2010 Olympics, it now also hosts facilities for indoor rock climbing, table tennis, badminton, swimming and more.

For the less athletically inclined, the Olympic Experience hides in an upstairs corner: a museum of Olympic paraphernalia, trivia and both virtual reality and live-action Olympic games to try.

But if you're really interested in whether there's a gold medal in your future, head to the International Buddhist Temple to get your fortune told.

Stroll through the complex, modeled after the Forbidden City in Beijing, and its serene garden, taking the artistic flourishes in the murals, shrines and architecture.

There, in the Thousand Buddha Hall, visitors can kneel in front of the Oracle of Kuan Yin to ask a question, shaking out one numbered bamboo stick from a cup full of them. That number designates the oracle's answer, which is written on the corresponding pieces of paper filed nearby.

If the Oracle predicts a crazy night for you, head to the Richmond Night Market to fulfill your destiny. A mini-city comes to life on weekend evenings as more than 400 retailers set up shop, along with live entertainment -- from magicians to Chinese opera -- on stage.

Food, of course, is part of the show, including the making of dragon's beard candy, by pulling sugar into delicate, thin threads, but it shares the spotlight with Korean socks (eight pairs for \$10), trendy toys (ahem, fidget spinners), and the latest Asian beauty products (hello, sheet masks).

Richmond Olympic Oval, 6111 River Rd, Richmond, 778-296-1400

International Buddhist Temple, 9160 Steveston Hwy, Richmond, 604-274-2822

Richmond Night Market, 8351 River Rd, Richmond, 604-244-8448

Award-winning food and travel writer Naomi Tomky uses her unrelenting enthusiasm as an eater, photographer, and writer to propel herself around the world. Follow her on Twitter @Gastrognome and on Instagram @the.gastrognome.

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