

Cecilia Nguyen-Do/ May 1/ 832-283-8423
Third annual Asiafest show Houstonians many cultures

Houstonians interested in exploring Houston's diversity were able to experience an abundance of Asian cultures at the third annual Asiafest on Sunday.

Asiafest, a festival that takes up a whole field, a street, and the two-story building of Asia Society, celebrated different Asian cultures with interactive activities, food trucks, authentic dances, and vendors. The Asian cultures included in this festival spanned anywhere from Iran all the way to Australia. With so many different countries and cultures to select from, this year's festival was different from the previous festivals.

"Houston is such a diverse city," **said Director of Performing Arts and Culture Stephanie Todd-Wong**; "It has such a wealth of people living in each of those cultures, in familiarity of each of those cultures. There's no shortage of ideas or things that we can include and plan."

Like previous years, Asiafest had performances both outside in the lawn and inside the building. This year, Asiafest once again had an abundance of performance that included a Tai Chi demonstration, a Korean Folk Dance, a Taiwanese puppet show, and a Bollywood Dance.

"Every hour we do a performance outside," **said Special Events and Account Manager Patty Mooney**, "and then inside, in our theater, on the half hour, they do a performance."

The festival also had interactive activities for children on the second floor. There were also vendors inside and outside and food trucks lined down the street.

“We try to have all different kinds of food out there for the guests to enjoy, whether it’s burgers, Thai food, Asian fusion, that type of thing,” **Mooney said.**

However, the best aspects, according to Todd-Wong and Mooney, of the festival went deeper than the performances, activities, foods, and vendors.

“It’s accessible for everyone no matter income or education level,” **said Todd-Wong when asked about the festival’s best features;** “To me, it’s just a great way to come and experience a lot of different things all in one day without it costing much. But I think the highlight is just the exposure to all the different experiences that you can have.”

People who came to the festival got a chance to emerge themselves in a plethora of different cultures in a span of eight hours. Visitors could listen to traditional Chinese music, eat an Asian fusion taco, buy some sriracha, and make bamboo art.

“It’s a one day festival to bring the community together,” **Mooney said;** “The whole purpose is to bridge the gap between the Asian community and the United States.”

Those from different cultures had the chance to experience other cultures. Visitors were advised to come with an open mind.

“Give yourself the opportunity to experience something new,” **Todd-Wong said;** “That’s the beautiful thing about it– there’s just so many different things to see and experience that it hopefully broadens people’s world a little bit.”

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