

The new Chinatown: Mall style

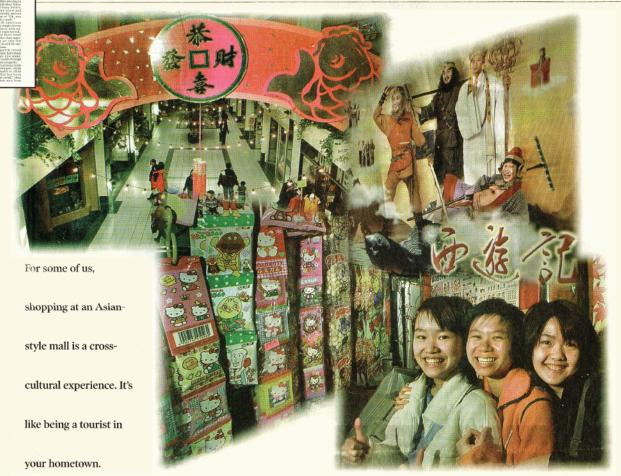
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SECTION

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THE VANCOUVER SUN

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HAPPY TIMES: Brenda Li, Tina Tam and Teresa Cheng pose for pictures in the Deka Pri photo booth, one of many outlets at the Aberdeen Centre.

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DOUG WARD VANCOUVER SUN

he word Chinatown evokes for many white Canadians the image of a hidden, somewhat exotic quasisment of neon lights, narrow old buildings and secret passageways. That's the old Chinatown. Or its myth anyway.

Our new Chinatown — the one built up around No. 3 Road and Cambie in Richmond — conjures up different imagery.

The scene is suburban not inner city, afternoon not night, bourgeois not working class, well-dressed couples in imported cars not old men slowly walking down rainslicked streets.

The new Chinatown is a public space based on that most modern of architecture — the shopping mall. A dozen of them, to be exact.

Shopping at an Asian-style mall is, for Caucasians, a cross-cul-tural experience. You step into a world where you are the visible mi-

world where you are the visible minority. A tourist in your hometown.
Walk into the Aberdeen Centre,
for instance, and you're inside a
mall not that different from what
you would find in Hong Kong. The
Aberdeen Centre bears the same
name as a well-known district in
Hong Kong.
Aberdeen Centre is the oldest of
Richmond's Asian malls, the creation of developer Thomas Fung,
the scion of a super-wealthy Hong
Kong family. Fung originally tried
to secure large national brand outlets to the mall but the majors
balked — why compete with their
outlets down the road at Lansdowne Mall and Richmond Centre?

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Families come for dim sum at the Tog Gun Restaurant or to bowl on the 24 lanes at Tog Gun Bowling, which is open until 2 a.m. on weekends. There's the Long Shong Cinema, which shows popular Hong Kong movies. Tea lovers can sip black plum tea or honey ginseng tea at Fook Po Tong Herbal Tea.

The Aberdeen has a small food court where seniors can socialize over lunch at places like the Fair Bee Coffee and Tea Shop.

duce there's gai lan, pea shoots and matsutakes.

There's a small food court with various Asian fast food outlets on the second floor. Also on the second floor is the President Chinese Seafood Restaurant, which serves Cantonese food with Mandarin and Szechuan influences. Here extended families indulge in dim sum, ordered fried shrimp rolls, steamed pork buns and steam vegetables with oyster sauces.



We Sell Nothing But Jigsaw Puz-

The malls reflect the massive wave of middle-class immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan in the '90s, a demographic that includes feng shui decoration sales-

malls have the style of retail found in many mainstream malls — clothing stores, book stores, gift shops, supermarkets.
Still the Chinese malls really are a world apart for many Caucasians. The merchants are all ethnic Chinese, as are the vast majority of their customers. Indeed, the Caucasian security guards in the malls seem to outnumber the white customers.

tomers.

Most products are imported from Hong Kong or Taiwan and there are any number of culinary ingredients that would make Caucasian shoppers recoil. Frogs, for

Baxter buys fish at a store in the found in the Aberdeen Centre and frequents a small toy store in Parker Place where he can buy small model cars. He loves the eclecticism of the Asian malls that is often missing in sians. Chi-tivy of Caumalls et al. (2014) the Asian malls with their Gaps, Club Monacos and Suzy Shiers. Club Monacos an



Wine Tasting: Anthony Gismondi and guests sip a half dozen from

Weekend