

A Century's Worth of Celebration

BY MALIA BRAIDEY

WHILE HALLOWEEN IS widely celebrated throughout the United States, it's a bit more serious in the town of Anoka, Minnesota. Known as the Halloween Capital of the World, this city's history around the event started approximately a century ago, prompting a special cause for this year's celebration.

While you would think that this city would gain its title from a haunted past, unfortunately, there were other circumstances prompting the city's recognition. In 1920, George Green and other civic leaders of Anoka were struggling to contain groups of proclaimed "pranksters" in the city, especially when it came to Halloween Night. The solution? A celebration so big that they would be distracted from their antics.

This would be a first around the world, as it was unheard of to do such a city-wide event regarding Halloween. While it fulfilled its original purpose, it also became so popular among Anoka residents

that it became a recurring occasion, and has taken place almost every year since. It became so popular that in 1937, Anoka was deemed the Halloween Capital of the World in the nation's own capital, Washington D.C.

However, numerous events have been added to the original roster of a singular parade and block party. For example, this year's functions include multiple nights of Bingo, a home decorating contest, a medallion hunt, a pancake breakfast, and even a day-after pumpkin smashing event in order to promote environmental awareness through the city. They've also upgraded from a singular parade to three different parades, two of which on the day before Halloween, and one of which represents the original parade — a chance for the children to show off their multitude of costumes down Main Street Anoka.

Various city-wide competitions occur around this

time as well, including a children's coloring contest, a children's pumpkin carving contest, a button designing competition, and even a competition for the Anoka Halloween Ambassador— crowned the day before Halloween. Winners of these walk away far from empty-handed, as they're not just awarded titles and positions, but cash prizes or scholarships.

As last year's festivities were canceled due to the pandemic, this year's celebration is an accumulation of both the 100th and the 101st year of this event, making it a long-standing tradition and rich portion of Anoka's community and culture.

Whether you're looking for a distraction for a troublesome few like the original founders, or a place to truly dive into Halloween festivities, take a trip up to Anoka to emerge yourself into a city full of treats, with a couple of tricks up its sleeve as well.



Photo Credit: Dylan Holtmeier



Peking Garden Review

BY DYLAN HOLTMEIER

THERE ARE TONS OF fantastic restaurants all along University Avenue, and this isn't one of them. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot going for this restaurant, including the atmosphere and service. There is a koi pond in the restaurant with real koi fish swimming around, and all the servers there are pleasant and helpful. However, they struggle with fundamentals, specifically food. I think there are some good items on the menu and the food generally tasted fine, but it has a few shortcomings which stop it from tasting great.

All of the dishes I tried had one or more elements out of balance. I ordered the Pork Dumplings and Quail Halves as appetizers. The dumpling wrappers were thick and had a bit of bite to them, which I liked. However, the filling was missing some saltiness and was on the edge of bland, even though I could tell there was a good flavor base and it was juicy. On the flip side, the quail was too salty and too dry, with not enough flavor. It came with a bed of assorted greens, which was probably the best part of any meal I tried. It was composed of cabbage, green onion, and cilantro tossed in oil and balanced perfectly with each other.

For my entree, I went to the Chef's Specials section of their gigantic menu (rivaling that of the notoriously large Cheesecake Factory menu) and ordered the Sizzling Duck. I thought sizzling would mean it's spicy, but they poured it into a hot cast iron pan and the sauce sizzled and released pleasant smelling steam. The duck itself was delicious, having good texture and flavor, especially the skin. The rest of the entree was mediocre at best. It consisted of standard fare stir fry vegetables like baby corn, sliced carrots, watercress, and snap peas. The sauce was slightly too sweet, didn't have any defining flavor profiles, and completely drenched the whole dish. It would have been good plated over rice to soak up the sauce, but it didn't come with rice and the chunks were too big to be eaten with anything else. I had to eat the entree one vegetable at a time when it would have tasted better if I could have fit multiple elements of it into my mouth without looking like a chipmunk.

My entree seemed to be the rule rather than the exception. My friend's dishes who came with me to the restaurant were also plated in a similar fashion, with sugary sauce dousing the unmemorable flavors of humdrum food. The food was fine but unremarkable, and I was left generally unimpressed. I give Peking Garden 3 out of 5 stars.