

S.E. Asian Resources

TopLine Grocery

Here is the one place in Queens where you can actually find Indonesian groceries in addition to Thai, Filipino and other Asian varieties.

81-37 Broadway, Elmhurst, NY 11373 (718) 458-5505

The Warteg

Here is the sole place to get Indonesian fare in Queens. Despite its humble warung (Javanese fast-food hut) style, it even has a Zagat rating.

51-24 Roosevelt Ave., Woodside, NY 11377

Thai Wat Thavornaranum

Despite its obscure setting the Thai temple is open to visits from outsiders who may wish to meditate or meet the monks who work solely off of alms, or offerings from the community, so do not forget to bring some fruit or water as your own offering if you go.

76-16 46th Ave., Elmhurst, NY 11373

Bangkok Market

Produce like lemongrass, galangal and kaffir lime leaves - essential to Thai cuisine, but rarely found in other markets - can be found here. Make sure to say "sawatdee" in greeting to the elderly Thai woman who owns it.

64-11 39th Ave., Woodside, NY 11377 (718) 458-3685

Embassy of Vietnam

An excellent resource on the history and culture of Vietnam.

1233 20th Street, Suite 400, Washington D.C. 20036 (202) 861-0737

Sripaphai

The "best representation" of Thai cuisine in all of New York is here, nestled in a Woodside neighborhood.

64-13 39th Ave., Woodside, NY 11377 (718) 899-9599

Foundation for Filipino Artists (FFA)

Keeping the traditions alive (literally) kicking, singing and dancing are the summer school classes with the FFA and Director Aida Bartolome.

34-67 60th street, Woodside, NY 11377

Perlas Ng Silangan

Filipino cuisine that hails from various islands and regions of the Philippines can be enjoyed at Perlas as can occasional musical performances. Ask the owners Cherri and Nel Castellvi for more information on the ingredients in your dish and their history.

69-09 Roosevelt Ave., Woodside, NY 11377 (718) 779-2991

For More Information



Queens Botanical Garden

43-50 Main Street
Flushing, New York 11355

go to: www.queensbotanical.org
click on: "Ethnobotanical Website"
pull down: "Queens in Story"

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(718) 886-3800 ext. 220

The New York Community Trust

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New Celebrations, Old Traditions

S.E. Asian Heritage in Queens

**Project Funded by The New York
Community Trust**

*The place where people, plants
and cultures meet*

Queens Botanical Garden

43-50 Main Street, Flushing, New York 11355

Transplanted from homelands far away, South East Asian communities in Queens celebrate traditional and ancestral festivals in “new” ways that contribute to the reconstitution of the borough as both a vibrant bricolage as well as an innovative frontier. Indeed, as a site of transcultural diversity the neighborhoods of Queens have come to provide new contexts to root cultural practices and systems stemming from disparate regions of the world. Despite the absence of the original botanical, symbolic and social milieu that nurtured these intermingling elements in the homelands, S.E. Asian traditional festivities endure in North America, especially because they are an integrated vehicle that continually evokes “home”, roots, kinship and spirit - through floral displays, cuisine, gifts, crafts, arts, incense, ritual games, symbols and community participation.

In addition, while the S.E. Asian communities are less established and smaller than some of the other transcultural communities in Queens, research into their festivals reveals their potential to unite diverse attendants in an overall cultural renewal - regardless of whether the festival takes on a more strictly customary or a more innovative or hybrid character. Indeed, common to all the S.E. Asian festivals, whether it is based in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, indigenous practices, or ancestral piety, is the shared celebration of cultural, symbolic and natural treasures that often merge with the sources of good health, cuisine, arts, and aroma. However, ultimately, the festivals reveal that it is the distinctiveness of S.E. Asian cultural practices and symbolic systems that are applied to naturally-based treasures that preserve and reproduce the value of plants.

This research was made possible by The New York Community Trust (NYCT) and wraps up a series of research endeavors exploring the celebration of S.E. Asian Festivals in Queens - starting with the Vietnamese New Year ‘Tet’ and continuing with Thai and Filipino-American festivals, the ‘Songkran’ and ‘Kadawayan’ (Festival of the Islands), before ending with the Indonesian Muslim feast, ‘Lebaran’. Each research and collaboration brought new insights and compounded the conclusions of previous research studies with regard to understanding how Queens’ communities are in “frontier zones” (newly emergent and newly establishing) as well as how the homeland cultural practices reproduce the value of plants both at home and/or abroad - particularly in Queens and New York.

Botanica symbolica

mango,
the heart of
a maiden's
sacrifice
(Philippines)

lychee,
offering one
branch of the
luscious fruits
was a request
for courtship
or even
marriage
(Thailand)

betel leaf,
sprayed over
the head of a
mother's
daughter to
cure her
broken heart
(Indonesia)

kumquat,
symbolizing
a family tree
of grandparent
(fruits), parent
(flowers) and
children
(leaves and buds)
(Vietnam)



Winter Tet (Vietnam)

Similar to the Chinese New Year, the celebration of Tet Nguen Dan demands descendant families submission to the unseen forces behind fortune and happiness said to be determined by dual sources: the Kitchen God and the Jade Emperor. Obtaining a good report on the management of the families' house and home may be helped by cookies served on an altar for the Kitchen God, who sends the account to the charge of Jade Emperor. It's also desirable to have the ancestors smiling on a family's future; therefore, incense is burned for them. Later, the old year's report is said to be “extinguished” (tet nien) with firecrackers. The centrality of family and home is also symbolically reaffirmed during the Tet through essential purchases of Kumquat trees - with each part representing one generation of the family.



Upper left: Many types of citrus fruit like the kaffir lime are important in Vietnamese tradition. Direct left: A young attendant of the Thai Songkran Festival. Above: Dancers and drummers at the Thai Temple. Upper right: Foundation for Filipino Artists (FFA) children present “The Legend of the Pina” at the Queens Botanical Garden. Below right: The Warteg on Roosevelt Ave. in Woodside, Queens.

Spring Songkran (Thailand)

Themes of water, purification, merit and play bring a diverse constituency of the Queens community in April to the Thai Wat Thavornanaram to celebrate the Thai New Year. While the most visible sights related to Songkran in Bangkok are mischief and play, monks dressed in robes (dyed saffron with turmeric root) add a spiritual element to the day. Statues of the Buddha and Kuan Yin, as well as floral arrangements, are bathed by water and orchids by those seeking dam, or merit for the coming year. Either orchid wreaths or pueng ma lai (jasmine wreaths) decorate those who have already gained dam in consecration from the temple community. Thai specialty foods like tom yum soup and noodles are enjoyed before engaging in the entertainment: water baths/fights (between young and old), dancing, beauty contests, and sandcastle building.

Botanica sensoria

bittermelon,
bitter cures
sweet, with this
traditional
remedy for
diabetes
(Philippines)

lemongrass,
pungent
citronella aroma
is used to keep
away
mosquitoes
(Thailand)

kencur,
this earthy
rhizome is used
to balance
women's
reproductive
systems
(Indonesia)

bamboo,
this highly
flexible grass
is used in
furniture while
the leaves are
used to wrap
sticky rice
dumplings
(Vietnam)

Summer Festival of the Islands (Philippines)

Based on the Kadawayan Sa Davao held in the Philippines in June, QBG paired with the Foundation for Filipino Artists (FFA), and local Filipino restaurant Perlas Silangan to have a “Festival of the Islands” to celebrate the “true wealth” of Filipino heritage. In this way, botanical treasures like bamboo, used in the Tinakling Dance, as well as taro leaves, used in a traditional Filipino dish called Laing, were not only revealed but were also reproduced within cultural practices in Queens.



Fall Lebaran (Indonesia)

From sunrise to sundown during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, members of the Indonesian Muslim community in Queens fast, pray and purify themselves. In the evenings, they may break the fasts at The Warteg on Roosevelt with a “Gudeg Special” made of jackfruit and uniquely spiced with cloves. In this way, while the inheritants of the original “Spice Islands” carry on Islamic based religions, their foods carry on the Islands’ original botanical and cultural wealth. Indeed, the feast at the end of Ramadan is called Lebaran because it evolved also with a local dukun, or a healer who uses jamu (botanical potions) in rituals. In urban areas, however, the common feature of Lebaran is having ketupat, or sticky rice cakes wrapped in baskets woven from banana leaves.

