

# The Daily News

---

## Tiny Suburban Neighborhood Produces Great Global Perspective

One is located right around the corner and one further down that road. One resides in a cul-de-sac off the main road and two down a street that leads to my house. Our elementary school is not far away and several more families live right near it. My neighborhood has a predictably “unusually” high number of Chinese families. We tend to migrate near one another. It’s practically a miniature Chinatown here, minus all the stores and restaurants, of course. All of these families are very connected to each other, mostly through the school aged children. It’s hard to walk down the hallway at school without bumping into another Chinese kid. With all of the playdates, Chinese parents get to know each other well, sharing tips on how to navigate life in Greenwich, Connecticut. Even the grandparents can be heard bantering in their native tongue at the bus stop. We come together intentionally as well. Multiple times every year we celebrate both Chinese and American holidays with big parties; sometimes we get together just for the fun of it.

When we do gather for these parties, they are always centered around food, a tradition our parents brought with them. I can always expect a large spread of Chinese classics on the table. Everything is carefully and meticulously prepared by the host, perhaps over several days. Personally, though, I don’t like Chinese food; none of us kids really do. Over time, some American foods have thankfully managed to sneak their way onto the table. Chinese dishes have even been slightly altered, using American ingredients in an attempt to appeal to the younger generation. One of the things us kids enjoy most is watching their parents try to recreate American holidays. They may *consider* a having a turkey at Thanksgiving in order to be authentic, but I can tell duck when I taste it! At least the store-bought pumpkin pie is actually *pumpkin* pie. Although they strive to instill the traditions of their homeland in us, they do try to embrace this new land.

Of course, parties aren’t just about the food. Everyone also gets to spend a lot of quality time with each other at these parties. To the Chinese, quality time means gossip. The parents always gather in the living room before dinner and stay at the dining table long afterwards, just chatting the time away. It starts out with everyone sharing what’s new in their life; but because of our competitive nature, talk quickly turns into news about others. The women gossip about home life; the men gossip about finances. Even the children join in on the fun in our own little circles mimicking the adults. Many traditions are passed down this way.

These simple but deliberate attempts at preserving and passing on culture, impact my daily life by giving me a broader perspective than my American peers. Sure, I speak two languages and that will serve me well as an adult, but the far greater gift is the global perspective my parents have nurtured in me. One of the greatest values Chinese people hold is travel. My parents sacrifice so that we can travel extensively. I have visited nearly all 50 states, four continents, and countless countries. This important aspect of Chinese culture has also contributed to my deeper understanding of the world beyond my Greenwich neighborhood. During discussions in class, I realize that my perspective and thinking are generally very different from those of my non-Chinese classmates because of my roots. I value viewing history, literature, and school subjects globally and I am grateful for the developing global perspective that has been passed down to me. I once believed that the cultural traditions my parents immersed us in was a straitjacket, but now I understand that they were actually equipping me to face the world with open arms.

-- Annabel Zhou