



“The only honest reaction and true loyalty we get is from our animals. Once they’re your friends, you can do no wrong.”

— Dick Van Patten, longtime actor and animal rights activist, who died this week at age 86

FOOD

Iftar: Breaking bread and cultural barriers during Ramadan

By EMILY LESLIE
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

“May God accept your fasting,” Turkish-American host Fuat Aksoy said as each member of his family bit into a date palm — together breaking their Ramadan fast.

Conversation flowed between Muslim and non-Muslim guests alike. Selma, Mr. Aksoy’s wife and mother of three, presented lentil soup and bread to each guest at the iftar, or the “break fast” meal Muslims eat after sunset during Ramadan.

“Breaking bread transcends all religions and cultures,” iftar guest Emre Celik, said.

As president of Rumi Forum, the organization that planned the iftar, Mr. Celik’s goal is to encourage intercultural dialogue and peace in the world through cultural events.

“In a post 9/11 America, Muslims have felt a little isolated,” he said. “Our programs of bringing members of the D.C. community into Turkish-American homes helps overcome the possible ignorance that may exist through engagement and dialogue. And sharing a meal is a great venue for this.”

Christianity, Islam and Judaism are united by a common origin through Abraham, Mr. Celik pointed out, fostering a peaceful coexistence among different religions.

“It is said that Abraham never sat for a meal on his own. If he was alone, he would not eat,” he said.

“It is a blessing to have guests, in particular at Ramadan,” he said. “We are told by Prophet Muhammad that a

IFTAR MENU

FIRST COURSE

- Date palms, walnuts, olives, pickles
- Lentil soup and bread
- Dolma (rice, mint and parsley wrapped in Turkish grape leaves)
- Sarma (rice, onion and meat rolled in steamed cabbage)

ENTREE

- Beyti (ground beef and chopped onion wrapped in tortilla, served with yogurt sauce)
- Kofti (meatballs and fried, sliced potatoes topped with diced tomatoes)
- Watermelon slices

DESSERT

- Kadayif (walnut pastry dish topped with string-shaped dough, served with vanilla ice cream)
- Cay (Turkish tea)

THE WASHINGTON TIMES



BY EMILY LESLIE/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Turkish kadayif, a pastry dish similar to baklava, is offered as the dessert course of a traditional Muslim iftar, a fast-breaking meal served after sundown during the holy month of Ramadan, alongside cay, a tea drink.

guest brings with them 10 blessings and leaves with only one; nine have been left for the family.”

“[Iftars are] a form of culinary diplomacy,” a fellow iftar guest said of the host family’s gracious welcoming.

Mr. Aksoy’s mother, a Turkish native who speaks little English, presented her homemade sarma, or stuffed cabbage rolls, and dolma rolls with rice, mint and parsley stuffed inside grape leaves. The “buyukanne,” or grandmother, brought them straight from Turkey’s capital herself.

“I’m still learning how to make those,” Mrs. Aksoy said with a laugh in appreciation of her mother-in-law’s culinary expertise.

Mrs. Aksoy then offered her incredible

main course of Turkish kofti, a meatball and fried potato meal, and beyti, a sliced tortilla rolled over ground meat and onion, and watermelon slices.

“In Ramadan, we always share dinner,” Mr. Aksoy said of opening his home to guests, who are sometimes complete strangers. “Food is very important because God gave us food. He gave everything.”

All the while, three young Aksoy children ran about the home. The eldest, an 8-year-old boy, clung to his games

as most boys his age do. The daughter, who just finished kindergarten, bashfully hid behind her mother. The youngest, a 22-month-old girl, spoke a mix of Turkish and gibberish that even her parents could not decipher.

The family has lived in the United States for 10 years but holds true to its roots in Turkey’s capital, Ankara.

The cultural differences between American and Turkish women became prevalent when the grandmother was informed that one of her guests was a

young, single woman.

“Now is the time [to get married],” she exclaimed in a light, friendly manner. Turkish families are generally traditional and patriarchal, with women as proud homemakers and rearers of children.

Turkish kadayif, a pastry dish similar to baklava, was offered for dessert. Mr. and Mrs. Aksoy acknowledged with a laugh that they bought the treat from the frozen section at Safeway.

With the final course, it is tradition to drink cay, a Turkish tea served in a tulip-shaped glass. Contrary to popular belief, Turkey is the homeland of the tulip, the family said.

“The Dutch commercialized the tulip, but really it’s from Turkey,” Mr. Celik said in defense of Turkey’s beautiful tulip fields.

As family and guests gathered at the table for kadayif and cay, Mr. Aksoy expounded on the meaning of Ramadan.

“It’s not just eating. We have to give up all bad things and be perfect people,” he said. “We should be friendly, give to the poor and pray.”

Anyone interesting in registering for an iftar should send an email to ben@rumiforum.org. To learn more about Rumi Forum, visit RumiForum.org. “Our goal in interfaith dialogue is to establish solidarity among members of major world faiths by nurturing empathetic acceptance and mutual respect,” said Rumi Forum’s honorary president, Fethullah Gulen.

“By standing together as members of diverse faiths, we would like to establish a breakwater against waves of misguided, suspicious people who yearn for a clash of civilizations.”

Get Out

The week’s pocket picks

By SAMANTHA SAULT



Dining

Alexandria Food & Wine Festival

We’ve always loved Alexandria’s cobblestoned streets, and now the city has become a foodie destination. On Saturday, you have a chance to try many of the area’s best restaurants and wines while enjoying a riverfront view. From 12 p.m. to 6 p.m., try Union Street Public House’s classic pub fare, Mason Social’s modern American cuisine, and Alexandria Cupcake’s award-winning Guinness Stout Cupcake, among other restaurants. Nearly a dozen Virginia wineries will also be available to taste, along with food trucks and other vendors. There will be a moon bounce and crafts for the little ones, plus rock and blues by Scott Ramming and the CrawStickers as well as Gina DeSim-

one and the Moners. **Saturday at Oronoco Bay Park, Alexandria, Va. Web: AlexandriaFoodAndWine.com.**

Art

Gustave Caillebotte: The Painter’s Eye

In 1875, Gustave Caillebotte submitted a painting to the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, but the esteemed institution rejected his work. However, Edgar Degas and Auguste Renoir saw something in the young painter and encouraged him to try for the impressionist shows. Mr. Caillebotte’s unusually realistic depiction of shirtless workers finishing a floor caused a sensation, and kicked off his respected career that lasted until his death at age 46. Because he never sold his works, he’s not nearly as well known as his contemporaries, but his works deserve a look because, as he once wrote to



Monet, “the very great artists attach you even more to life.” Beginning Sunday, you can get a chance when the National Gallery opens a comprehensive exhibit highlighting his impressionist works. The exhibit runs simultaneously with “Pleasure and Piety: The Art of Joachim Wtewael,” showcasing the Dutch artist’s risqué scenes from mythology and bible stories. **Through Oct. 4 at the National Gallery of Art, 6th St. & Constitution Ave. NW. 202/737-4215. Web: nga.gov.**



Museum

Opening of the American History Museum’s Innovation Wing

After months of renovations, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History will reopen the first floor of the museum’s West Wing for exhibits focused on innovation, just in time for the country’s 239th birthday. The 45,000-square-foot area opens on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. with a ribbon cutting ceremony with live music and DJs, and every day through the next week the museum will host living history presentations, docent-led tours, and hands-on activities. You can get a first look at new exhibits like “Inventing in America,” highlighting the pioneering work of Morse, Bell, and Edison, and “American Enterprise,” chronicling the impact of businesses and capitalism on American life from the 1700s to today. “Places of Invention” will showcase the development of Technicolor in Hollywood, hip-hop in the Bronx, and the personal computer in Silicon Valley, while the Gallery of Numismatics will explore the evolution of American money and the role of money in art and culture. **Opening events Wednesday through July 5 at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, 14th Street & Constitution Ave. NW. 202/633-1000. AmericanHistory.si.edu.**



Dining

Pop’s SeaBar Snow Cone Launch

This week, you don’t need to go any further than Columbia Heights for your favorite boardwalk-style foods. On Wednesday, Pop’s SeaBar, the seafood restaurant from the owners of Cashion’s Eat Place inspired by summers in New Jersey and St. Petersburg, Florida, will launch snow cones for the summer. Made with fresh, local fruits, the flavors include spearmint and lemon, strawberry and Bing cherry — which can be infused with Novo Fogo Cachaca, El Dorado 8-year Aged Rum, Bulleit Bourbon, and Meletti Amaro for indulgers of-age. If you need another excuse for a snow cone, from July 1-7, the restaurant will donate \$1 from every cone sold to Brainfood, a local nonprofit devoted to helping high-school students develop life skills and healthy eating habits. **Pop’s SeaBar, 1817 Columbia Rd. NW. 202/534-3933. Web: PopsSeaBar.com.**

