

## FIVE QUESTIONS

# Let's talk Turkey

The Ottawa Turkish Festival was celebrated from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday at Confederation Park.

Thousands gathered to watch Turkish folk dances, the Whirling Dervish of Rumi, calligraphy and painting demonstrations, browse through Turkish jewelry, handicrafts and pillows and, of course, eat. From kabobs and donairs to vegetarian and olive oil dishes, festival-goers also tucked into Turkish ravioli, Turkish coffee and Turkish Delight.

Organized by the Canadian Turkish Heritage Foundation, this was the group's second annual festival.

We spoke with CTHF organizer Kerim Khan to learn more.

**Q.** How long has the CTHF been around?

**A.** The association is fairly recent. Our primary activity is organizing the Ottawa Turkish Festival, which is really a year-round job. We formed just over the past year.

**Q.** How many members does the foundation have?

**A.** Our foundation has an open membership; we don't collect membership dues or anything ... Our aim is to promote Turkish culture, introduce Turkish culture into Ottawa and facilitate a dialogue in between

communities. Those were our founding principles. The Turkish community in Ottawa-Gatineau is around 2,600 people according to StatsCan's latest census figures.

**Q.** Putting on a festival is a lot of work. What made the foundation decide to do this?

**A.** Over the years we've been having community picnics, communal dinners (and) there was always the urge to share with the greater community ... Last year was the first year we put on the festival. We rented out Confederation Park for one day and it was a great success. The support that we got from the community enabled us to put it on for two days this year.

**Q.** For people who missed the festival, what would you like them to know about Turkish culture?

**A.** I think what jibes with people the most is food. Turkish cuisine is one of the most distinct cuisines in the world. It's really a crossroads of western values, eastern values and the food sort of reflects that. You can get a taste of both worlds. There are a variety of meat dishes like kebob and donair. Donair actually means "around its own axis" in Turkish.

**Q.** What is the significance of the Whirling



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**A RARE PAUSE:** Ottawa Turkish Festival organizer Kerim Khan poses for a photo at Confederation Park on Saturday.

Dervish performance?

**A.** The whirling dervish's performance is sort of a mystical experience.

There's a lot of symbolism in the performance itself, from the cloaks the performers wear to the gowns, to the hands, the right pointing upward; the left looking downward

and revolving around themselves.

It sort of signifies the oneness of God, that man has come from God and will go back to the earth, and all we take with us is the white cloak, signifying the simplicity of life.

— Adrienne Asch, 24 hours

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