



Istanbul Dialogue Night

December 11, 2008 Norcross Branch at 7 pm

Guests gathered last evening for an assortment of Turkish food and delights, chatting with friends and exchanging experiences about the topic of

“Food and Faith,”

an apt topic for this time of year as many religions are having large celebrations such as Kubran Bayrami, Christmas and Hanukah, among others. Presentations were given by Lisa Spinks and Meryam Ozer, both long-time friends of Istanbul Center.

The topic of the evening was “Food & Faith” and how they relate to each other. Throughout the year, celebrations and times of mourning are all conjoined with gathering around food. This evening’s discussion was about the link between eating food and one’s religion, or faith.

Fellowship with loved ones

Eating and sharing food is essentially about fellowship with your loved ones and others, such as at Christmas, Passover, Easter or even a funeral. Food also brings comfort in times of hardship, such as financial crises, or when you just know that your cousin or uncle is sick, and you decide to take him or her a dish of food. One can’t forget also that food brings people together who normally might not have a chance to otherwise congregate, such as those events you hear of throughout your life advertising free coffee or food.

Religious Gatherings

If one is religious in any way, he or she will eat food during or after festive celebrations, or even weekly as many Christians take Communion each Sunday or Wednesday evening at church. Transubstantiation is the term used for the belief of some Christians who believe that when they take Communion, that the symbolic wine (or grape juice) and bread (or crackers) actually turn into the blood and body of Jesus Christ when the food enters their system.

As such, the food enters and feeds one’s body whereas the faith enters and feeds one’s spirit. Have you ever heard: You are what you eat? Sufi religious men often will abstain from eating animal products because the qualities of the food are believed to be more aggressive being from an animal. Many faiths routinely abstain or fast from either all food or water, or some variation of this, in order to enlighten their faith (their experience of gratitude and faith in the higher power in which they believe).

Overall, the respect for food, whether one is religious or not, is an important part of life, especially as the country finds itself today in such a state of financial crisis to where people are losing their jobs left and right, unable to provide for themselves and their families.

And as a mother's words will always tell you: Clean your plate! There's a starving child somewhere who has a lot less than you!