



کانون فرهنگی ایرانیان

# Peyk

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# 198

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سز نو رز

*Happy Nowruz*  
HAPPY PERSIAN NEW YEAR

- IS IT 1401 ALREADY?
- INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NOWRUZ: AN ORAL HISTORY
- BEING IRANIAN MAKES ME A "GOOD AMERICAN"
- WHY I HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR THE IRANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY
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- HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAVELERS
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- CALIFORNIA! HERE WE COME!



Saeed Jalali



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Shaghayegh Hanson



## Is It 1401 Already?

It seems oxymoronic, to Western eyes, to ask if it's already the year 1401; after all, we are in the 21st century, not the 15th. But, of course, technically, this Persian new year, or Nowruz, will herald in the year 1401. No, it's not time travel, just the Gregorian versus the Solar Hijri calendar, officially used in Iran and Afghanistan. The difference is not always highlighted, so I thought I would give it a quick mention.

Both the Gregorian and Solar Hijri calendars are solar calendars, but there are two important differences. First, the Gregorian calendar runs from the birth of Jesus, while the Solar Hijri calendar runs from the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina (not to be confused with the "Islamic calendar," which runs from the same event but is a lunar calendar). Second, the Gregorian calendar uses a set of rules, such as leap years, to stay in sync with the solar year, whereas the Solar Hijri calendar relies on astronomically-based seasons, beginning with the vernal equinox. And, since I am already skirting the edges of my knowledge, I will leave it there. It is, actually, a fascinating subject area, but definitely beyond the scope of this humble editorial.

Regardless of which calendar we observe, it is a universal truth that the years seem to go by more and more rapidly as we get older. It feels just like yesterday that I left London as a young woman to come to America, and I find myself still referring to England as "home" sometimes. But I have been here now since 1991! I imagine that is how many first-generation Iranian Americans felt (and perhaps still feel) about Iran, especially since the majority of them left believing they would soon return. No one thought the Islamic revolution would take root and last this long. In some ways, I think those first members of our community lived in denial, in a sort of purgatory, one foot in the new country and one foot in the old, fearful of emotionally committing to either one, before finally realizing that time had decided the matter for them. The conundrum was aggravated by the uncertainty of whether they would find acceptance in this country, given the political tensions between their two homes. Look no further than Reza Khabazian's personal immigration story, which sadly concludes in this *Peyk*, to get a sense of what I mean; his Texan employers asked him to be "Steve" from Turkey because being "Eye-ranian" would be bad for business. (Page 20.) Reza tells his story with such love and humor that he makes it impossible to feel angry on his behalf. What Reza has been able to capture in his story is the learning curve of humanity, the ups and downs of two cultures growing together out of necessity.

And so, now, having celebrated the Gregorian Christmas and New Year, we turn ourselves over to the Solar Hijri Nowruz. Necessity has given us a harvest of celebrations to enjoy. Thanks to all the first-generation Iranian Americans for keeping the tradition of Nowruz alive for all of us. May it always survive the test of time. This Nowruz we are better able to come together physically to celebrate. It is, in some ways, a true rebirth out of the recent COVID isolation. Not to say our guards should be fully dismantled, but with vaccinations and rapid testing availability we can enjoy our biggest holiday in a more expansive bubble. We, at *Peyk*, hope the year 1401 brings you and your family joy, peace, and good fortune. Happy Nowruz!

### Persian Cultural Center's Bilingual Magazine

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#### Persian Cultural Center

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Persian Cultural Center  
A non-profit national corporation  
Established in 1989. San Diego, California

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## PCC's Board Meetings

Persian Cultural Center's board of directors holds its meetings every second Wednesday of the month. The last two meetings took place via Zoom, on January 12 and February 9, 2022.

## Mehregan Concert – December 30, 2021

The video of the Mehregan concert with Aida Shahghasemi was launched on YouTube on December 30. This event was held on October 2, 2021, in the San Diego Museum of Art's Sculpture Garden. Visit Persian Cultural Center of San Diego's YouTube channel.



## Electric Ūd Trio Concert – January 16, 2022

Electric Ūd Trio concert performed by Angelica Pruitt on contrabass, Koosha Hakimi on drums, and Farhad Bahrami on electric Ūd was held on January 16 at PCC.



## Quarantine Night's Poems – January 19, 2022

In this virtual event hosted by Farshad Babakhani and PCC's Poetry & Literature Committee, poems by *Roodaki*, father of Persian poetry, were recited. The attendees then participated by reciting their own selected poems.

## Virtual Movie Discussion Series – January 27, 2022

*The Trial of The Chicago 7* (2020), directed by Aaron Sorkin and starring Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Sacha Baron Cohen, Daniel Flaherty, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Kelvin Harrison Jr., Michael Keaton, Frank Langella, John



Carroll Lynch, and Eddie Redmayne, was the selected movie for the January virtual movie discussion. Mahmoud Pirouzian hosted the discussion. The guest of the program was Dr. Mohammad Pooya, a physician and actor who reviewed the movie.

## Quarantine Night's Poems – February 16, 2022

In this virtual event hosted by Farshad Babakhani and PCC's Poetry & Literature Committee, poems from *Rabe-eh Balkhi* were read and attendees also read their own selected poetry.

## Virtual Movie Discussion Series – February 24, 2022

The selected movie for the month of February was *Antonia's Line* (1995), directed by Marleen Gorris and starring Willeke van Ammelrooy, Els Dottermans, Jan Decleir, and Veerle van Overloop. The guest of the program was Mahmoud Behroozian, theater and cinema actor who reviewed the movie.



## The PCC Youth Committee Report

### Current Activities:

- 1- The PCC Youth Committee hosted its fourth food and toy drive in November 2021. The committee collected 324 pounds of food and \$50 cash. The food was donated to the San Diego Food Bank and the toys were distributed to Iranian families in need and children at St. Vincent de Paul.
- 2- Committee members are continuing to provide free remote tutoring to people of all ages for a variety of subjects and are helping many students in school.
- 3- Committee members are also volunteering at the Iranian School of San Diego as teacher assistants.

### Future Activities:

- 1- Volunteering with other non-profit organizations (i.e., San Diego Food Bank, Father Joe's Village, assisting Afghani refugees in San Diego County, etc.)
- 2- Monthly hike
- 3- Food and toy drive
- 4- Talent show
- 5- Active role in high school Persian Clubs (promoting culture at schools)

Please check the Persian Cultural Center newsletter every Tuesday or PCC's website for updates and details. If you are interested in joining the PCC Youth Committee, please contact the PCC office at (858) 552-9355.

## PCC's Charity Committee

The Charity Committee is currently helping two Iranian refugee families. The first family (husband, wife, and a nine-year-old child) requires legal help, health care, and living accommodations. We hired an attorney to assist them with their legal needs. A very kind member of our community has generously offered them temporary housing, food, and accommodations until mid-March. They will need more permanent housing after March 15. We are collaborating with AIAP and Dollar a Month Fund (DMF) for this project.

The second family (husband, wife, and a four-year-old child) stays at a special facility with no access to the outside world. The child needs special medical attention. We are collaborating with DMF to provide for the child's medical needs. The family must have a sponsor to provide housing and some financial support. They are also in need of legal representation.

PCC Board of Directors and its Charity Committee members have always appreciated your support. We hope that together we will also help these two families. To help, please contact the PCC office at (619) 552-9355.



## NOTICE

# Persian Cultural Center Annual Meeting and Election Sunday, May 15, 2022

The Persian Cultural Center of San Diego will hold its annual meeting and election for members of the Board of Directors on Sunday, May 15, 2022, at Mt. Carmel High School, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Mt. Carmel High School is located at 9550 Carmel Mountain Road, San Diego, CA 92129.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- Welcome by PCC president
- Annual Board of Directors report
- Introduction of the candidates
- Election process and results

If you have been a member for the last year and are interested in running for the board, please contact us immediately. If your membership has lapsed or you would like to become a member, this is the best time to do so and join us in our annual meeting. You can find the membership form on our website at [www.pccsd.org](http://www.pccsd.org).

A list of candidates and instructions for voting will be sent to all PCC members. Thank you for your support. If you are a current member and did not receive a voting package in the mail, please contact us immediately.

Thank you,  
Board of Directors of Persian Cultural Center



In wishing everyone a joyous Nowruz season, the Persian Cultural Center will be sharing haft-seen displays at the following public libraries throughout the City of San Diego:

Carmel Valley Branch Library  
3919 Townsgate Drive, 92130

College-Rolando Branch Library  
6600 Montezuma Rd, 92115

La Jolla/Riford Branch Library  
7555 Draper Ave, 92037

Linda Vista Branch Library  
2160 Ulric St, 92111

North University Community Library  
8820 Judicial Drive, 92122

Rancho Penasquitos Branch Library  
13330 Salmon River Rd, 92129

Pacific Beach Taylor Branch Library  
4275 Cass St, 92109



Dollar a Month Fund

**Dollar a Month Fund's  
Annual Charity Bazaar  
Saturday March 12th - 11 to 2 PM  
Iranian-American Center (PCC)  
6790 Top Gun St. #7; San Diego 92121**

# International Day of Nowruz: An Oral History



Sixty-fourth General Assembly Plenary  
February 23, 2010

71st Meeting (PM)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RECOGNIZES 21 MARCH  
AS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NOWRUZ

Longtime readers of *Peyk* may remember the effort that went into asking the United Nations to recognize Nowruz as a cultural tradition celebrated by communities all over the world. At the time, in 2009 and 2010, many PCC members, *Peyk* readers, and celebrants from across the globe helped by signing the petition and spreading the word. But getting to the finish line was no easy task. *Peyk*'s own Shahri Estakhry was the leading force behind the movement and, given that it is that special time of year again, we are thrilled to walk down memory lane with her about this international accomplishment.

This interview has been edited for clarity and space considerations.

*Peyk: Hi Shahri, thanks for meeting up today. It's always good to remind ourselves of what can be accomplished when people come together for a common goal. How did you first get involved in the push toward having Nowruz recognized by the United Nations?*

**Shahri Estakhry (ES):** Well, as my friends who receive middle-of-the-night emails from me know, I do my best thinking at 3 a.m. One night soon after Christmas in 2008, when the yearly calendars were out for 2009, I got to thinking about why so many religious and cultural holidays were on calendars but Nowruz never is. I looked into it and found out it wasn't on the UN calendar and thought it should be! So I emailed Eamen Hameed, PCC board member at the time, and asked him about how to start a petition because I wasn't tech savvy. I knew he was and would know what to do. He did a great job and soon the petition started circulating more and more. I let PCC know what I was trying to do and PCC was very on board. We let *Peyk* readers know as well and the petition just took on a life of its own... so many signatures came in so fast!



*Peyk: What did the petition ask for and how did you get the UN's attention?*

**ES:** The petition was simple; it asked the UN to recognize Nowruz and include it on the UN calendar. We asked those who signed the petition for their name and the country they lived in, to show that this was a global effort. I worked for the UN early in my career and I knew a petition wasn't technically required, but I still wanted to show that we had the support of people from all over the world. Once we reached 300,000 signatures, in March 2009, I sent a letter to then-Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, asking that the UN update its calendars to commemorate Nowruz.

*Peyk: How long did it take the UN to respond?*

**ES:** We were pleasantly surprised to receive a quick response—about three weeks later—from the Under-Secretary-General of the UN at the time, Kiyo Akasaka. He let us know we would need to have a group of member nations submit our request to the agenda of the next General Assembly.

*Peyk: How did you go about doing that?*

**ES:** Well, we were lucky that a young woman who worked at the UN reached out and offered to help us. Unfortunately, I can't remember her name, but she was from one of the member nations that celebrate Nowruz. She guided us, providing us the contact information for the ambassadors of the seven member nations who would end up submitting our request—they were: Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. We contacted them and kept collecting signatures for our petition at the same time.

We got a boost in September 2009 when UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) added Nowruz to its "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity."

*Peyk: When did the UN General Assembly agree to recognize Nowruz? And was there any difficulty with the name, considering how people spell it differently?*

**ES:** Oh yes, everyone wants (and wanted) to spell Nowruz differently. I personally spell it Norouz, but it didn't matter and we didn't want that to limit the petition or our goal. It doesn't matter how we spell it—we all celebrate the first day of spring as the new year.

In February 2010, we had over 600,000 signatures to our petition and we requested the ambassadors of the seven member nations who celebrate Nowruz to formally request that Nowruz be recognized at the General Assembly and added to the UN calendars. When the resolution passed in 2010, there was so much joy and excitement! You should have seen the dancing and celebrations!

*Peyk: It has been a dozen years since Nowruz was recognized by the UN. What impact has the recognition had globally? Are you happy with the result of your hard work?*

**ES:** Unfortunately, I haven't seen much impact. Even though the UN agreed to put Nowruz on its calendars, it never has. That has to change! So, I will get to work again. I plan to write a letter to the current UN Secretary General, António Guterres, to remind him that the UN has an obligation to put Nowruz on its calendars. I will tell him that I am 80 years old this year and want this change while I am still alive to see it!

*Peyk: Great, we will let our readers know once you've sent your letter how they can help amplify your voice by asking the UN to follow through with its resolution. Thank you, Shahri, for all your hard work. Happy Nowruz!*



# Being Iranian Makes Me a "Good American"

By James Hanson

What does it mean to be a good American? I have found myself confronting this question internally and in debates with my peers numerous times since the presidential elections in 2016. We are in the midst of one of the most divisive eras of American history, and yet, people of radically opposing views lay claim to the same fundamental values upon which our country was built. Two centuries ago, Alexis de Tocqueville identified these American values as equality, tolerance, hard work, opportunity, and liberty. How does a "good American" uphold and practice these values? Time and again I return to a source some may consider un-American in many ways, but that is a large part of who I am and the way I perceive the world. That source is my Iranian heritage, more specifically my mother's life as an Iranian immigrant.

My mother was born in Mashhad, Iran. Political tensions in her early life grew heavy, with a new revolution on the rise to install a religious, Islamic regime. My mother was forced to flee and find a new life as an immigrant in England. She didn't understand or speak English but was thrown into primary school and told to catch up. Despite being teased and bullied by her classmates for her lack of understanding English, she was motivated to learn. Eventually, she became fluent in English and attained the highest reading level in her class, earning the respect of her prior bullies, who were now her friends. By high school, my mother found herself a "brown" woman in the middle of the skinhead era of neo-Nazis and radical British conservatism. She was harassed, called names like "Paki," told to go back to her own country, and threatened with violence on the streets. She remembers not being allowed into friends' households as their parents didn't want a foreigner inside their home. These experiences ignited a passion in her to earn a law degree and help minorities like herself. My mother worked hard for what she accomplished in life. She learned through personal experiences with racism to treat everyone with equal respect, and through her family's suffering under a totalitarian regime that her personal freedoms were non-negotiable. Her life as a Persian immigrant coincides perfectly with the values we uniformly hold as crucial to being an American, a set of values embedded in the immigrant way of life: opportunity, equality, hard work, tolerance, and liberty.

These are all values that I learned from my mother's stories and try to emulate in my own life. I strive to be the best version of myself. Whether it's giving it my all in sports and motivating my teammates even when we are losing, or persevering through a difficult anxiety disorder, I never give up. I practice equality through listening to both sides of an argument and presenting myself as a mediator for conflicts I'm exposed to. I have worked hard to make it onto four different varsity teams while earning honor roll GPA throughout high school and making notable personal growth. I pride myself on being tolerant of others even if I disagree with them. I try to understand why people act the way they do instead of simply judging them on their actions. This has been quite advantageous for me throughout the recent political strife. Instead of ostracizing people for their political beliefs, I have been more discerning about politicians seeking power by dividing us.

Since 2016, I have realized the reason radical

conservatives view people like my mom as un-American is the same reason I perceive my mom as a true American, and the same reason that I have the proper foundation to be the best American I can be. Because I am Iranian American.

James Hanson is a former student of Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD). This submission is derived from James' college application essays.



## PCC Nowruz Celebration

Saturday, March 19, 2022, 7 p.m. to Midnight

La Jolla Marriott

4240 La Jolla Village Drive, San Diego, CA 92037

Information: (858) 552-9355

For tickets: Eventbrite



## Şizdah Bedar 2022

Sunday, April 3, 2022, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

NTC Park

2455 Cushing Road, San Diego, CA 92106

## Jong e Farhangi

Friday, April 15, 2022, 7 p.m.

Iranian American Center

6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121



## Poetry Night

Wednesday, April 20, 2022, 7 p.m.

## Movie and Discussion

Thursday, April 28, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

## ISSD Nowruz Preparation

Sunday, March 6, 2022, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Mt. Carmel High School

9550 Carmel Mountain Road, San Diego, CA 92129

## ISSD Nowruz Celebration

Sunday, March 13, 2022, 4 to 6 p.m.

Del Norte High School Auditorium

16601 Nighthawk Lane, San Diego, CA 92127



## DMF Nowruz Bazaar

Saturday, March 12, 2022, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Iranian American Center

6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121





# Why I Have High Hopes for the Iranian American Community

By Hooshyar Afsar

## Introduction

Recently, I attended a panel discussion on Zoom about dehumanization of Iran and Iranians in the U.S. which sent me on an emotional rollercoaster both during and after the meeting. At the bottom was a sense of despair about the current and future state of the Iranian American community, while the peak was a sense of joy for our accomplishments and our ability to meet the challenges we face.

Long ago, I learned from my father that a sense of balance is an essential aspect for happiness and productivity in life. He once said to me that when you are really depressed and you think there is no hope in this world, visit a cemetery. And when you feel so happy and proud that you think you are on top of this world, visit a cemetery. My father was pointing out the temporary nature of our existence—giving me a practical way to be in touch with what is important in my life to arrive at a sense of balance. So, I thought about writing a piece about why I have high hopes for our community to arrive at the sense of balance that I desired after attending the Zoom panel discussion.

When reacting to negative portrayals of Iranians, there is a typical response by many of our community members in the United States to defend ourselves by telling the offenders that we are highly educated people who enjoy economic success higher than other immigrant communities. But these common refrains are *not* why I am hopeful for our community; rather, I have chosen three specific examples about our community's resourcefulness and impact that go beyond wealth and education.

## Iranian American Community Organizations

Iranian Americans have dozens (if not hundreds) of community organizations in the United States. In addition to major national organizations, we have regional organizations that make an impact in our community and the communities they touch. Here, I am going to showcase two, namely those in Atlanta and San Diego.

Persian Cultural Center of Atlanta (widely known as Kanoon) is a clear and instrumental part of the Iranian American community in that city. It has a spacious center with many rooms for Persian classes and a sizable event hall, and its Persian school has made a difference with second- and third-generation Iranian Americans for decades. Prior to COVID-19, Kanoon hosted many social gatherings and celebrations, including Nowruz and Mehregan, in addition to regular talks by experts on a variety of subjects such as history, philosophy, and the arts. Its annual Atlanta Persian Festival attracted tens of thousands of people every year, with dozens of businesses participating. After COVID-19, Kanoon flexibly adapted itself to the new situation and continued holding many of its events via Zoom, including switching its Persian classes from in person to online learning. Not only did Atlanta's PCC hold

hundreds of Zoom events during the pandemic, it expanded its impact to Iranian Americans in other parts of the country. Atlanta is known as the birthplace of the Civil Rights movement and its PCC has stood firm in support of racial justice and immigrant rights movements. Last but not least, Kanoon also acts as a place where people in the Iranian American community who are in economic or emotional distress can get help—there are many examples of people who have lost a loved one and didn't know anyone else in Atlanta or others who have become unhoused counting on PCC to support them to get back on their feet.

Readers of *Peyk* are already familiar with the Persian Cultural Center of San Diego, yet it is important to briefly touch on its more than three decades of accomplishments. There are many similarities between the San Diego and Atlanta PCCs. Both have been very active in the community and in organizing community events. San Diego's PCC has two major accomplishments that are noteworthy. One is the Persian school (Iranian School of San Diego) that, at its peak, had nearly three hundred students. The school—which is the outcome of decades of effort by community organizers and teachers—publishes its own textbooks and provides high school language credit for certain advanced classes. Thanks to ISSD, many third-generation students are learning Persian well enough to speak it better than their second-generation parents. A second significant accomplishment of the San Diego PCC is the bimonthly publication of *Peyk*, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. In addition to its free online version, the printed version is mailed to thousands of subscribers across the U.S. Its pages cover an exciting variety of subjects that are both informative and amusing.

The breadth and depth of the success of these two community organizations shows that, in spite of our differences and our challenges, we are capable of creating long-lasting community entities that continue to thrive and serve their members, supporters, and the community as a whole.

## City Council of Atlanta

With the election of [Liliana Bakhtiari](#) to the city council of Atlanta this past November, for the first time in the history of our Iranian American community, we now have two Iranian Americans elected as members of a major American city governing body. In 2018, [Amir Farokhi](#) was the first Iranian American elected to the city council of Atlanta; he was re-elected in 2022.

In addition to being recognized by the people of their districts in Atlanta through the power of vote, both Farokhi and Bakhtiari have progressive policies and support the rights of the Iranian American community. Farokhi has supported many of Kanoon's programs.



Prior to her election to office, Bakhtiari was a community organizer who worked locally and in 26 countries spanning four continents on such grassroots causes as seniors rights, curtailing predatory lending, and fighting human trafficking, among others. A member of the LGBTQIA community, Bakhtiari is openly gay, sharing her personal life on her web site. During her campaign for city council, she was sponsored by a city-wide coalition that pursued real change and supported the interests and unheard voices of the underserved.

The fact that our community has two city council members in the birthplace of the civil rights movement is a huge accomplishment. In a sense, as the civil rights movement resulted in the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act—thus facilitating the growth of our Iranian American community for decades—we have an opportunity to give back to local communities that were instrumental in benefiting us by bringing historical progressive change.

## Second-Generation Iranian Americans and SWANA

I have written several articles for *Peyk* about the history of racism and race as a social construct—specifically about how our racial categorization as white robs us of our own place among other communities and consequently deprives us of all the rights that come with being a non-white community. There has been a general movement in the U.S. to define a new racial category, namely Southwest Asian North African (hence the abbreviation SWANA\*).

SWANA provides for a sense of solidarity with all the communities who originate in those regions. Contrary to common simplifications which limit those communities to Iranians and Arabs, there are many ethnicities which live in those regions who do not identify with either Iraninans or Arabs. Also, Iran is a multi-ethnic country itself with various intersections of ethnicity, language, and even race.

To get an objective sense of the consequences of adopting the racial categorization SWANA, let's talk about what University of California at Berkeley students achieved in this regard. Led by Iranian American students, a student movement at Berkeley convinced the university to expand representation of SWANA as a historically mischaracterized group by including the category in the application process and collecting/reporting data on SWANA students. It took a three year campaign in which Arab American students were also actively participating. This means that there is now data on enrollment and recruitment for the past eight years that will help all SWANA applicants, including Iranian Americans, achieve fair representation rather than being invisible by their dissolution in the white category. Another significant aspect of this accomplishment is that SWANA students now receive budgetary

funds and physical space in the campus student union so that they can have a stronger sense of community and opportunity for organizing. The fact that Iranian American students went beyond many anti-Arab racist tendencies in our community and united with Arab Americans was another major accomplishment—showing what solidarity with other communities of color could do to further the cause of being a great and flourishing community.

Imagine what could become available to our Iranian American community if this new racial category is officially recognized in the U.S. Census and SWANA becomes an official minority status. If students at UC Berkeley could achieve all those benefits, our whole community in this country could acquire funding and representation in addition to collection and reporting of data that will benefit us for the foreseeable future.

## Ending Note

These three examples of hope and pride are only a fraction of many other positive and empowering aspects of our community. They are different from stereotypical ways that many members of our community try to portray us, i.e., highly educated, economically successful, and “white.” They tell a story of community organizing, community activism, civic engagement, running for office, and being elected as progressive and dynamic candidates. They tell the story of solidarity with other communities of color bringing about positive and progressive change. These are the kinds of stories that bring joy to my heart.

\* A similar term exists—MENA (Middle Eastern North African)—but there are arguments against MENA and for SWANA as the term Middle East has clearly-established colonial roots.

*Hooshyar Afsar is one of the founders of Racism Awareness Project (RAP), an educational program on the history of and present-day racism in the United States and its impact on the Iranian American Community. RAP has had a variety of educational forums across the United States. Mr. Afsar has written several articles and book reviews on the topic for Peyk and other publications. He can be reached at [hoosh.afsar@rapusa.org](mailto:hoosh.afsar@rapusa.org).*



# An Interview with Amir Eslami

By Vahid Jahandari



*Amir Eslami is a celebrated Iranian musician progressively introducing Persian music in the past three decades internationally through his pursuit as a composer, conductor, and performer of the musical instrument “ney,” a type of Persian flute that has been played for over 4,000 years.*

*I had the privilege of working with Eslami during my undergraduate studies at Tehran University of Art, where he served as a faculty member in music. He is the first Iranian to win first prize at the Concorso 2 Agosto International Composition Competition in Italy, where his symphonic work was premiered in Bologna in 2009 and broadcast in RAI. I interviewed Eslami to learn more about his background and current activities in Vancouver, Canada.*

*This interview has been edited for clarity and space considerations.*

**Vahid Jahandari (VJ):** Please tell us about your early life in Iran.

**Amir Eslami (AE):** I was born in Isfahan in 1971. As a child, I listened to popular music, particularly American icons. I grew up in a family when my mother was religious and my father, on the other hand, quite secular. In my teenage years, I observed my two brothers playing Persian instruments—tombak and santoor—and I gradually familiarized myself with traditional music.

I found a fascination with the music and virtuosic performance of Gheorghe Zamfir, the Romanian pan flute player. Despite my passion for learning this instrument, there was no instructor in this field in the city, and even to this date, I don't believe there is any. Therefore, I took ney lessons while at Technical High School studying auto mechanics, since there was no music school at the time in Isfahan either. However, my concentration was primarily on my music performance practice.

My first concert was held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 1988 in celebration of Nima Yooshij, the contemporary Iranian poet. I took the entrance exams for admission to the BA Program in Music in 1991 at Tehran University of Art, where my application was considered.

**VJ:** How did you progress in your field of studies in Tehran?

**AE:** My studies in Tehran opened new perspectives in continuing my interests, emphasizing improvisation and composition.

Working with Maestro Ahmad Pejman significantly influenced my life and career trajectory ever since. I then followed my composition studies and obtained a Master's degree under his mentorship in 2004.

I have taught music courses as a music faculty member at Tehran University of Art since 2002. I have also served as the head of the Persian Music Department in 2005 and the Dean of Administration in 2012. I received three national prizes and won three international music awards from Italy, Australia, and the Netherlands by the time of my residency in Iran. Furthermore, I was recognized as the best lecturer among the music faculty in 2008 and the best researcher in 2009 for publishing the oldest Persian music repertoire.

**VJ:** When did you move to Canada, and what have you been working on recently?

**AE:** I immigrated to Vancouver in 2015, where I started working in a radio station, and I had a weekly program about Persian music and poetry, available on my YouTube channel. I established Rumi Records to release my music. I also initiated the HazarAva Ensemble with three female singers to perform Persian polyphonic songs, and I released an album with this ensemble in 2019 that recently received the Global Music Awards.

I founded the Vancouver Iranian Choir with several local musicians to perform Persian language choral pieces with roughly 40 members. I maintained the rehearsals with the choir online during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have organized singing classes for seniors with no prior knowledge of music theory and have had a pretty positive outcome.

Furthermore, I established the Iranian Music Society of British Columbia; currently, the association includes over 150 members. Ambleside Orchestra and Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra have also performed my pieces in the past few years. I continued teaching individual and group classes following my immigration. Virtual learning was not popular at that time, but I could effectively instruct students, so I devoted more time to pedagogy.

I have published many research studies on teaching children, applicants who aim to pass the entrance exam, and university students since 1996. My publications include new approaches to improvisation in Persian music and sight singing/ear training for Iranian students.

**VJ:** *Why did you leave Iran, despite being a successful professor of music and having your own music institute?*

**AE:** I had financial stability, secure positions, and well-established academic standing in Iran. However, I did not have a free mind as an artist, the safety in addressing my creative process the way I desired. I could not achieve in Tehran something I wished as a human being; the constraints and restrictions were unsettling. In Vancouver, my productions and all of the activities I pursue, ultimately my growth as a musician, were substantially heightened. I did not find the need to pursue my university employment in Tehran any further since I had the experience for over a decade, which was sufficient to integrate the expertise into my current and future works.

What matters the most, I believe, is to be thriving in your field and feel the progress and the pace of moving forward. Over the past seven years of my residency in Vancouver, I have been happier. Day by day, I have observed the transformation due to changes in lifestyle and freelance occupation I chose over remaining in Iran.

**VJ:** *Why do you think Persian music has not spread across continents as much as Indian, Chinese, or Arabic music?*

**AE:** I believe that in recent times musicians like Ostad Shajarian, Hossein Alizadeh, and Kayhan Kalhor have played a significant role in promoting Iranian art. One matter to consider is the much larger populations of the other nations you mentioned. It is also a matter of sociopolitical and religious conditions that have not allowed the music from Iran to be further accessible to the foreign audience. Yet, given all of the circumstances, Iranian communities outside the country can make a difference by supporting the provision of such an environment and allocating resources for more cultural events that represent our heritage.

Our Iranian expatriates are capable of improving the quality and range of activities by their local organizations. Today's Iran suffers from a lack of adequate care and attention to these critical matters. We have the opportunity to raise awareness rather than the counterproductive effort of westernizing ourselves, extinguishing our rich history, and altering our identity to a superficial and supposedly protected presence in modern societies.

Unfortunately, we are facing a decline in faith in our roots when other nations from South Asia to the Middle East with similar struggles have been more prosperous in restoring their legacy by detaching from the politics of pollution, despite global challenges.

**VJ:** *In what ways do you think our communities abroad can contribute to this output?*

**AE:** For instance, our communities benefit from initiating and expanding Iranian choirs. In one aspect, the attendees learn singing skills and develop teamwork. In addition, their listening proficiency and understanding of layers of sounds that construct the music substantially increase by participating as one component in a collectively acquired soundscape.

The choristers gain knowledge in theory and vocal techniques during rehearsals, which helps become better listeners and musicians. It enables them to realize and adjudicate various styles of repertoires and elevate their aural perception.

The weekly rehearsals function as a celebration of the background every member brings to the space when, free from their personal beliefs, they can agree upon the regulations and objectives, and unify their voice to deliver the maximum impact. The importance of choir also concerns use of the native language which transcends communication through the foundation of music, the hope for solidarity. Moreover, the choir glorifies words and facilitates the transmission of the intended message.

**VJ:** *What are your tendencies in writing music?*

**AE:** My composition aesthetics are primarily drawn from the Dastgāh/Maqām system, from interval relationships to form. Persian literature inspires me the most, and I always strive to push the boundaries of tradition and what is given to us as pre-determined formulas. I believe our heritage offers so much potential that is yet to be tapped, not only by incorporating such elements into a pool of pre-existing genres and layouts, but also through reimagining the past within experimental context and innovating new methods of utilizing them.

**VJ:** *I am grateful to you for having this interview with me. I look forward to hearing more about your achievements in the near future.*

# *Peyk*

*Peyk* is Persian Cultural Center's bimonthly, bilingual publication organized for literary, cultural, and information purposes.

Please write to us. We welcome your suggestions and opinions.

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# SDMA awarded \$60K from the National Endowment for the Arts

Ladan Akbarnia

The San Diego Museum of Art rang in the new year with exciting news of an important grant for two art commissions by the National Endowment for the Arts. The Museum was approved for a \$60,000 “Grants for Arts Projects” award toward support for art commissions by two California-based artists for SDMA’s 2024 summer exhibition, *Wonders of Creation: Art, Science, and Innovation in the Islamic World*. Kurdish-Iraqi American Hayv Kahraman and Iranian American Ala Ebtekar, who spoke recently about his artistic practice with curator Ladan Akbarnia as part of the SDMA’s Docent Lecture Series, will produce works conceived for the exhibition’s narrative about the intersections of art and science in the Islamic world. The commissioned works will ultimately become acquired by the Museum as part of the permanent collection.

Inspired by her research-based practice and attention to issues of gender, narrative, memory, and exile in diasporic cultures, SDMA will commission Kahraman to produce a work or small series of works in dialogue with surviving pages from the 13th-century cosmography by Persian scholar al-Qazwini, which inspired the exhibition’s title. A work by Ebtekar, whose similarly research-based practice layers different materials, techniques, and traditions to explore scientific traditions associated with Islamic discourse, will be commissioned for the exhibition’s second section on scientific processes and innovations. Kahraman and Ebtekar often integrate historical texts written by medieval Muslim scholars and polymaths on topics such as cosmology, astronomy, geometry, and Sufism, each of which belongs to the wide spectrum of sciences addressed in *Wonders of Creation*.

While their layered, multimedia work is steeped in extensive historical research that often draws from Arabic and/or Persian literature, both artists simultaneously engage the present through issues that cross cultural and sociopolitical boundaries. Kahraman weaves personal experience into traditional Islamic visual frameworks to address gender, narrative, and cultural memory in exile, while Ebtekar employs modern technologies such as cyanotype exposure on printed book pages to juxtapose Islamic optic and metaphysical theories with local and contemporary issues relevant to his identity as both an Iranian and an American. Situated in the diaspora, both artists have established reputations in the field of contemporary Middle Eastern art, but their work belongs equally to any history of contemporary, American, or Californian art and visual culture.

*Wonders of Creation* is also supported by The Getty Foundation as a grantee of its *Pacific Standard Time* initiative, which brings diverse organizations together by providing generous funding toward projects and programs responding to a special theme. In



Hayv Kahraman, *Decagram 2*, 2013. *Corporeal Mapping* series. Oil on panels, 46 x 46 inches. ©Hayv Kahraman.



Ala Ebtekar, *Zenith VIII*, 2021. Acrylic over cyanotype exposed to sunlight on canvas; quadriptych, 72 x 145 inches. On loan to SDMA by artist. ©Ala Ebtekar.

2024, the theme will be *Art x Science x LA*. Additional support for the research phase has come from Fred and Diana Elghanayan. Historic objects as well as contemporary art from Iran and the Iranian diaspora will feature prominently in the exhibition, and a special collaboration with the Balboa Art Conservation Center (BACC), located just around the corner from SDMA in Balboa Park, will focus on scientific research through a case study of 10–12 Indian and Persian paintings from the Museum’s renowned Edwin Binney 3rd Collection. Stay tuned for more news about the upcoming exhibition as we continue preparations in the next two years!

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Ladan Akbarnia, Ph.D., *Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art*, The San Diego Museum of Art  
(Twitter @LadanAkbarnia)



For your haft-seen table

## GHOTTAB: WALNUT AND ALMOND TURNOVER

Makes: 60 pieces

From start to finish: 1 hour, plus 1 hour refrigerating time for the dough

### INGREDIENTS:

**For the Dough:** 4 cups all-purpose flour; 24 tablespoons unsalted butter (3 sticks), chilled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces; 1/4 cup sugar; 1 1/8 teaspoons salt; 10-12 tablespoons ice-cold water

**For the Filling:** 1 1/2 cups unsalted, blanched almonds; 1 cup shelled walnuts; 1 1/2 cups pure cane sugar cubes (or granulated sugar); 2 tablespoons ground cardamom; 1/4 cup rose water

**For the Egg Wash:** 2 egg yolks; 1/8 teaspoon ground saffron; 2 tablespoons rose water

### INSTRUCTIONS:

#### To Make the Dough:

1. Place the oven rack in the middle position. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine flour, salt, sugar, and butter in a bowl of a food processor; pulse until the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Add water 1 tablespoon at a time into mixture and pulse after each addition until mixture becomes a dough. With hands, shape dough into a ball, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

#### To Make the Filling:

3. Meanwhile, combine, almonds, walnut, and sugar cubes in a food processor, in batches, until finely ground. Repeat until all sugar cubes, almonds, and walnuts have been used and puréed. Remove and place in a mixing bowl.
4. Add cardamom and rose water over the ground nuts. Mix thoroughly and set aside.

#### To Make the Egg Wash:

5. In a small bowl, beat egg yolks, ground saffron, and rosewater to blend. Then set aside.

#### To Assemble the Cookies:

6. Shape the dough into a large sausage. Slice the dough in 4 equal pieces. Work with one piece at a time, keeping the remaining dough covered.

7. On a lightly floured pastry board, with a rolling pin, roll out the dough to an 8-inch circle and about 1/8-inch thick. Using a floured cookie cutter, cut the dough into small circles, about 3 inches in diameter.
8. Fill each circle with 2 teaspoons of filling mixture, leaving a 1/2-inch margin. With a pastry brush, gently brush the margin with egg wash, then fold each circle into a half-moon shape, using a fork and pressing the two dough edges together, making a deep imprint in each one to seal the filling securely. Brush over each cookie with egg wash. Place the cookies on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Place on the center rack and bake in the preheated oven at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown.
9. Remove from the oven. When ghattabs are completely cool, store in an airtight container and refrigerate.

*“You take a small bite of ghattab and, for one ecstatic instant, your whole youthful years return to pleasure your eyes.”*

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# Team Melli's Nowruz Gift, Team Melli Banovan's Return, Comoros' Fairytale

By Danial Golphorush

## Team Melli's Nowruz Gift: This Year's Eidi Came Early

Much like those in many other developing countries, Iranians often look up to their athletes for a brighter day by making a statement on the international scene. In January, Iran's men's national football team (affectionately known as Team Melli) qualified for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar by defeating Iraq by one goal! In the first half, the Iraqi goalkeeper was holding down the fort and with every save it seemed like he was gaining more confidence! However, shortly into the second half, Alireza Jahanbakhsh's long through pass slipped under the feet of the fumbling Iraqi defender and Mehdi Taremi, the leading scorer of Porto FC, calmly lobbed the ball over the diving goalkeeper. Taremi's goal meant even a little more since he had just landed in Tehran twelve hours earlier from a long 4-day layover in Turkey from Portugal! Iran joins Germany, Denmark, Brazil, France, Belgium, Croatia, Spain, Serbia, England, Switzerland, Netherlands, Argentina, and host Qatar in becoming the 14th team to qualify for the 2022 World Cup!

Team Melli made history by qualifying for the third consecutive time. As the game ended, joyful Iranians, who are no stranger to economic and social hardships in the past decade, took to the streets and celebrated Team Melli's victory and advancement to the tournament! This victorious night had other reasons for celebration as well since, for the first time in decades, Iranian women were allowed to attend a match in Azadi Stadium once again! The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran has long excluded women from purchasing tickets to attend matches across the country. However, after football fan Sahar Khodayari set herself on fire and died in protest more than 2 years ago, FIFA has played a more active role in ensuring that women can attend the games as well. Since then, attendance of Iranian women in the stadium has become more routine. This is not to say that the problems of the past are resolved; accessing tickets is still not as simple as they can be and women still are discouraged to attend these events. As football continues to be Iran's favorite pastime, with such positive steps forward there ought not to be any turning back or stopping!

## Team Melli Banovan's Return: New Beginnings for Iranian Women

Team Melli is synonymous with joy, passion, pride, and sorrow at times! The Iranian women's team (Team Melli Banovan) has often been neglected by the public due to lack of resources and exposure, but with its return to the biggest stage of the Asian football scene—the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022—the team has created a new momentum for women's football across the country! Team Melli Banovan—led by Maryam Irandoost, a former professional football player and coach who is coaching the team once again—is fighting on and off the field.



While Team Melli (the men's team) benefits from decades of structure, experience, and support in place, Team Melli Banovan continues to battle the domestic stigma of women playing the game and wearing hijab while doing so on an international scale. Although in 2007 and 2011 Team Melli Banovan competed and placed second in the West Asian Football Federation Women's Championship, respectively, in 2011 they were banned by FIFA for wearing hijabs while playing the game, which led to Iran forfeiting their participation in the Summer Olympics the following year. Unfortunately, the ban was an "on brand" move from FIFA at that time since Sepp Blatter, then-president of FIFA, had made numerous comments on increasing the popularity of the women's game by letting "the women play in more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball. They could, for example, have tighter shorts." While the ban was lifted a year after its implementation, the negative influence on the game in Iran had already affected the set up and system in place for the national team. Team Melli Banovan continued to struggle to qualify for the AFC Women's Asian Cups in 2014 and 2018. However, with the qualification for the current games, the Iranian women made history. Even though Team Melli Banovan has struggled in the competition so far, losing by 7 goals to China and 5 goals to Chinese Taipei, the goal for this tournament is to not only give the team experience playing in the highest of levels, but to demonstrate to girls and women across the country that becoming a professional and successful football player can be achieved by them as well!

*Continued on page 15*



### Comoros' Fairytale: No Goalkeeper for You

Comoros, an impoverished archipelago with a population of less than one million people located off Africa's eastern coast, grabbed headlines as it qualified for the African Cup of Nations. This, despite having only joined the Confederation of African Football in 2003 and becoming a FIFA member in 2005. The start of Comoros' AFCON campaign began with defeats to two of the heavyweights of the tournament in Gabon and Morocco. Moving on to the next round of the competition seemed impossible with Ghana next! But in the biggest turn of events in the history of the game, Comoros defeated Thomas Partey's Ghana with an 85th winner from Ahmed Mogni! This victory was just enough to get them over the line to the last 16.

Comoros was facing the hosts Cameroon, a team filled with international superstars. Now celebrated as a giantkiller, Comoros' chances were slim to none after it was announced that their starting goalkeeper was injured and his two understudies had tested positive for COVID-19. This meant that Comoros was forced to play an outfield player in the goal; something that is seen once in a blue moon when during a game there are no substitutions left and a goalkeeper receives a red card. This was an extra special occasion as the substitutes were sickened not during the match, but days before it. It is common practice to have a rule in place which allows teams to call up more players in special cases, but this was not in place at the AFCON. Comoros was never meant to make it this far and with the crisis at hand, they marched forward to defeat the odds one more time! However, this time the likely winner stepped up and Cameroon was the one to advance after a commanding 2 - 1 victory.

With Comoros making history and becoming another fairytale in the book of the game, the image of Alhadhur, the outfield player who played in the goal and made a number of strong saves, embodies what the game stands for—passion. The image is from the back of Alhadhur's jersey who used tape to cover his number with the number 3. A true demonstration of Comoros' very own hero's journey with no stones unturned!

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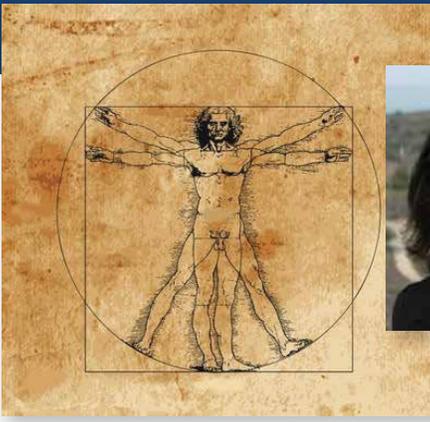
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By Sanaz Majd, MD



# HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAVELERS

Although the pandemic has taken a few steps back in recent months, travel plans do not seem to be thwarted as airports are packed, travel costs are skyrocketing, and supply is not meeting the high demand for flights. Americans are not holding back on traveling, even with the new variants sweeping the nation.

So if you are planning on traveling, it pays off to be well prepared for unforeseen medical illnesses during your travels, most especially during a pandemic. So, I wanted to dedicate this article to a list of must-take items in your travel first aid kit. This is what I generally take on my own travels; but, depending on your destination, your needs may be different and it is always wise to research the local health conditions of your destination prior to your trip.

Here is a general list to begin considering:

## Protective Masks:

N95 respirators are most protective, filtering about 95% of airborne particles in the air, and are the masks that healthcare professionals wear on the job. However, they are by far the most constricting and very difficult to tolerate for most (even adults).

Beware of Amazon because counterfeits of N95 masks are common. Here is a link on how to spot a counterfeit mask, along with lists of NIOSH-approved masks and known counterfeits: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/usernotices/counterfeitResp.html>.

A KN95 respirator, on the other hand, is another option that has been authorized by the CDC as an alternative during the world's PPE shortage (although their use is not permitted in the healthcare setting). Although better tolerated, they are manufactured in China and may not be as protective. About 60% of KN95 respirators that NIOSH evaluated did not meet the standard requirements.

If neither N95 nor KN95s are accessible or tolerable, then the next best option would be to double mask using a disposable surgical mask under a cloth mask. I personally send my kids to school using this method.

All of these options are better than a simple cloth mask, which has been shown to be the least protective.

The Biden administration has approved allocation of N95s for each

adult and will soon be distributing them to local pharmacies. Each adult can receive 3 free masks; none for kids has been allocated yet, however.

## COVID Test Kits:

The government has also recently approved funding for the mailing of 4 free at-home rapid COVID test kits per household. Note that the timing of self testing does matter, and if used outside that window of time, false negatives are possible. Here is the link to sign up: <https://www.covidtests.gov>. Taking along these home test kits on your trip may be of value.

## Pain/Fever Reducers:

Note that acetaminophen (Tylenol) does not require food intake, but ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) does as it can irritate the stomach lining if taken on an empty stomach. Do not forget to take some along for your children, as well.

## Antacids:

Antacids are especially useful if you are prone to heartburn or acid reflux. But new foods, spices, and flavors can induce symptoms for some. The category of acid reducers that omeprazole (Prilosec) belongs to (proton pump inhibitors, or PPI) are stronger but may take a few days to kick in; but the weaker H2 blockers such as famotidine (Pepcid) or ranitidine (Zantac) are shorter acting and more quick to provide relief. Both can be taken simultaneously if symptoms are severe/persistent enough. They are all over-the-counter medications (OTC).

## Small First Aid Kit:

This should include bandages of various sizes (take waterproof ones if you will be swimming), antibiotic ointment, a small antiseptic wound cleanser, and small scissors.

## Anti-histamines:

If you are prone to allergies, non-drowsy OTC loratadine (Claritin), cetirizine (Zyrtec), or fexofenadine (Allegra) may be useful in case of symptoms, given you will be in a potentially unfamiliar environment. These symptoms include sneezing, itchy/watery eyes, runny nose, or hives. Note that diphenhydramine (Benadryl) is more potent but it causes drowsiness and is shorter-acting. Obtain the generic alternatives, as they are less costly.

### Hand Sanitizer:

Most well-equipped hotels have this readily available. However, a trial-size container for every member of your household may still be useful for other times during the traveling process, such as in airports or on the plane.

### Disinfectant Wipes:

Perhaps short of being obsessive compulsive, I do purchase travel disinfectant wipes and wipe up all surfaces when first entering a hotel room. This includes countertops, table tops, light switches, remote controls, door knobs, the safe keypad, shower surfaces, and of course the toilet surface and knob. You can never be certain how well the room was disinfected prior to your use or who was staying in the room prior. Always better to err on the side of caution.

### Insect Repellent:

If mosquitoes are rampant at your destination, an insect repellent would be wise. Mosquitoes are one of the most common vectors of disease. The most effective are those containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide); although they have not been shown to be harmful in concentrations present in OTC products, there is some controversy over its use. DEET concentrations vary from 10 to 75%, however its efficacy plateaus at about 30% and higher concentrations than this are often unnecessary. Note that DEET can degrade plastic surfaces which come into contact with it.

In destinations with low levels of mosquito-borne disease, however, milder repellents may be sufficient. These include ones containing picaridin (a plant-derived compound which is odorless and non-greasy unlike DEET, and second to DEET in efficacy) or PMD (ingredient in oil of lemon eucalyptus, half as effective as DEET). Other agents marketed as repellents, such as citronella, botanical oils, various supplements, electronic devices, and repellent bracelets have not been shown to be effective.

### Hydrocortisone 1%:

This is an OTC cream that is useful for itching or rashes—think insect bites or poison ivy. Stronger steroid prescription topicals can also be used in lieu of hydrocortisone, but their use should be avoided on the face or groin, as the steroid creams can cause skin thinning and those areas are some of the thinnest on your body. They are most commonly applied as a thin layer twice a day for no more than 14 days max.

### Motion Sickness Medication:

An example is OTC dramamine, which may be useful for sailing or shorter-duration boat rides. Scopolamine is a prescription alternative, a small patch placed behind the ear and left for 72 hours and may be more useful for longer cruise ship trips. Note that motion sickness medications are often sedating and may cause sleepiness.

### Sun Protection:

Sunscreens with SPF 30 or higher—labeled as containing both UVA and UVB ray protection, with either zinc oxide or titanium as the active ingredient—are the most effective. Sunscreen is fully effective for no longer than 2 hours, however, and must be reapplied to maintain full efficacy.

Note that various destinations (such as Hawaii and various parts of Mexico) may have sunscreen regulations and some require reef-safe products. Also, do not forget about lip protection with SPF, eye protection

(sunglasses with UVA/UVB protection), and a broad brimmed hat for further face protection. Long sleeved swimwear and/or long sleeved rash guards, especially for children, may also be a wise option. If you are prone to sunburn, you may also want to take along aloe gel.

### FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL:

Check out the Center for Disease Control (CDC) page for the country you are visiting as early on as possible, because there may be certain vaccine series requirements and some of them are as spread apart as 6 months or more. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>

You also have the option to seek a travel doctor who is well versed in travel requirements and can optimize your health prior to traveling internationally, or seek a travel clinic at a local pharmacy such as Costco which may be a more economical choice (as many health plans do not provide travel clinic coverage).

Also, do not forget to call your health plan and determine if you have healthcare coverage while traveling abroad. Learn the details before you go in case of an emergency.

### Traveler's Diarrhea Treatment:

If traveler's diarrhea is endemic at your destination, a prescription antibiotic may be worthwhile. However, it is important to note that most traveler's diarrhea is still viral and antibiotics are not effective. But bloody diarrhea, specifically, is more often linked to bacterial causes. I generally advise my patients to avoid using antibiotics for mild to moderate diarrhea, which is typically self-resolving. If you do take along a prescription, ask your doctor when to actually take it in case you experience diarrhea on your trip.

### Anti-diarrhea Medications:

OTC loperamide (Imodium) is an example. Again, tolerable diarrhea does not need to be treated and can be left alone. This is one item I personally do not take with me, but if you are prone to diarrhea and your doctor deems it safe to take, it is an option.

### Water Purification Tablets:

Research the water quality of your destination if traveling internationally; bacteria, viruses, and parasites can be transmitted through consuming water and/or ice, or using it to prepare food or even brushing your teeth. You may boil the water for a full 3 minutes once it is rolling or take along water purification tablets. Here are the CDC recommendations for more details: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/making-water-safe.html>.

Food poisoning is common with international travel. In general, avoiding the consumption of water/ice and opting for cooked food (versus raw) will lessen your risk of contraction.

Last of all, do not forget to have fun! Bon voyage and happy, healthy travels!

*Sanaz Majd, MD is a board-certified Family Medicine physician and host of the Majd MD YouTube channel (@Majd MD), reviewing the latest medical topics and headlines. You can also follow her on Facebook or Instagram: @SMajdMD.*



# Nutritional Value of Eggs on the Nowruz Haft-Seen Table



## Introduction

One of the traditions during Nowruz is setting a colorful haft-seen table. There are certain natural foods on the table that start with the Persian S which are edible and have nutritional value, such as Sib (apple), Seer (garlic), Serkeh (vinegar), Senjed (dried oleaster fruit), and Sumac (dried berry). The nutritional value of these foods was discussed in *Peyk* #192. The haft-seen table is also decorated with other symbolic items that do not start with S but have great nutritional value, such as the colored eggs. In this article, we will discuss the nutritional value of eggs.

## Whole Eggs

Whole eggs contain most of the essential nutrients that the human body needs, including protein, essential vitamins, minerals, and energy-producing nutrients. These nutrients are concentrated in the egg white and the yolk.

## Egg Whites

The egg white contains albumin, which is a complete protein. A complete protein or high quality protein contains adequate essential amino acids needed by the human body. Although most foods contain some protein, not all proteins contain all essential amino acids. Nine of the 20 amino acids that make proteins are considered essential, because the human body cannot synthesize them from other sources, so they must be supplied through the diet. Foods that supply all nine essential amino acids in adequate amount and proportion are considered to have high quality protein, or *complete proteins*. The egg white provides all essential amino acids.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of protein in the U.S. is 46 grams per day for adult women and 56 grams per day for adult men. Studies show that pregnant women, lactating mothers, athletic individuals, older individuals, and people who are sick or recovering after surgery need more protein. One egg provides about 10% of the daily required protein.

## Egg Yolks

Eggs are naturally rich in vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B12, folate, biotin, vitamin D, vitamin A, selenium, iodine, and other essential minerals and trace elements, including phosphorus.

Almost all of these essential nutrients are found in the yolk. Studies show that the egg is a powerhouse of disease-fighting nutrients like lutein and zeaxanthin. These carotenoids may reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration in older adults. Additionally, brain development and memory may be enhanced by the choline content of eggs.

## Vitamin A in Egg Yolk

Vitamin A is best known for its role in normal vision, gene expression, reproduction, embryonic development, growth, and immune system functioning. One egg contains about 400 micrograms of vitamin A. The active form of vitamin A is only found in animal sources such as egg yolk and some other animal products. About 70-90 percent of pre-formed vitamin A is absorbed in the small intestine, so long as at least 10 grams of fat is consumed concurrently. Egg yolk provides fat as well as vitamin A. Provitamin A, a precursor of vitamin A, is found in plants and must be converted to active vitamin A in the body to be useful. However, absorption and conversion of provitamin A (such as carotene) to the active forms of vitamin A is not very efficient.

## Eggs and Cholesterol

Egg yolk contains lipids including cholesterol and other nutrients. The negative image of cholesterol is attributed to the belief that cholesterol is associated with heart disease. Actually, when people talk about cholesterol in relation to heart health, they usually aren't talking about cholesterol itself. It is the lipoproteins—the compounds that carry cholesterol in the bloodstream. One large egg contains 213 mg of cholesterol, accounting for two-thirds of the recommended daily limit. American Heart Association (AHA) guidelines suggests a total daily cholesterol limit of 300 mg. The confusion over eggs stems from their cholesterol content.

Cholesterol, like other lipids, is not soluble in water; therefore, when fats and cholesterol are transported in blood plasma, they must combine with more soluble compounds such as proteins. The combination of lipids with proteins makes lipoprotein. These molecules transport cholesterol and other lipids in the bloodstream. Depending on the proportion and types of proteins and lipids in lipoproteins, they are classified into different classes; among them are Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL), known as bad cholesterol



and High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL), known as good cholesterol. Therefore, HDL and LDL aren't actually cholesterol, but they are lipoproteins that contain cholesterol.

There have been many studies about the nutritional value of eggs. In studies of more than 80,000 female nurses, Harvard researchers found that consuming about an egg a day was not associated with higher risk of heart disease. One study compared the effects of whole eggs and a yolk-free egg substitute on cholesterol levels. The results showed that people who ate three whole eggs per day experienced a greater increase in HDL particles and a significant decrease in LDL particles than those who consumed an equivalent amount of egg substitute. (See references below.)

After many years of study, it has become evident that cholesterol in food is not the culprit. Saturated fats have a much bigger effect on blood cholesterol. Full-fat dairy products and fatty meats are examples of foods that are loaded with saturated fats. High levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol, particularly when oxidized, have been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. Research shows that some foods such as trans-fats or hydrogenated fats and sugars can raise cholesterol levels, but eggs are not one of them. Studies also show that artificial trans fats are linked to higher LDL cholesterol levels and an increased risk of heart disease. (See references below.) That's because oxidized LDL cholesterol is more likely to stick to the walls of the arteries and form plaques, which clog these blood vessels.

## Preparing Eggs

Washing eggs before handling them is a good practice which can eliminate some bacteria on the shell. Hard boiled eggs eliminate or kill most pathogens. The colored eggs on the haft-seen are usually hard boiled. Although they are edible, they may not be as nutritious as fresh eggs.

## Hard Boiled Eggs

When eggs are overcooked, signified by a ring of gray or bluish color around the yolk, the nutritional value of the egg may change. High heat can oxidize the cholesterol and cause the formation of chemicals such as oxysterols. Scientists have hypothesized that high blood levels of oxysterols may contribute to the development of heart disease, but further evidence is needed to support this theory.

## Fried Eggs

Eggs fried in fats can add more calories to the diet. Worse, polyunsaturated oils such as olive oil and corn oil cannot tolerate high heat, which changes their structure, producing toxic substances. Studies show that high heat such as that used in frying oxidizes unsaturated fatty acid in oils rather quickly. Oxidation of fats can lead to formation of free radicals or peroxides, which can cause health hazards and cancer. Even inhaling the smoke from burning oil is considered a health hazard and should be avoided. Animal fats such as butter and some vegetable fats such as avocado oil and coconut oil can tolerate heat better than olive oil. But fried eggs contain more fat than boiled or poached eggs.

## Free Range and Vegetarian Eggs

Free range eggs should come from chickens that are allowed to roam freely (free range) on pasture and have access to green fields. Please be advised that some egg producers may raise chickens on a floor (4-5 chickens per square meter) and market the eggs as "free range." Vegetarian eggs are produced by hens given feed that is free of animal products, such as fishmeal or bone meal or meat scraps. Vegetarian eggs are produced by hens that have been given all-organic feed.

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## Selected references:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nowruz>
  - <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/oranges#nutrition>
  - [https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/why-is-fiber-good-for-you#TOC\\_TITLE\\_HDR\\_3](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/why-is-fiber-good-for-you#TOC_TITLE_HDR_3)
  - <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/fats-and-cholesterol/cholesterol/>
  - <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/dietary-cholesterol-does-not-matter#effects>
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- Susan G. Dudek, *Nutrition Essentials for Nursing Practice*, ed. 5. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, New York 2006.
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## An Immigration Story:

**California! Here We Come!**

Reza Khabazian

Leaving your homeland and residing in another - with a totally new culture, language and set of laws and regulations - is very challenging and requires a lot of adaptation that, in most cases, is also very frustrating.

But, looking back at those challenges many years later makes some of them look funny, some amazing, and some, of course, sad. The truth is, no matter how we feel about them, the challenges are, for sure, part of the history of immigration that needs to be documented for use by our grandchildren or simply by historians to picture the hardship that first generation Iranians had to go through to meet those challenges.

The main purpose of this column is to encourage our readers to start telling their stories so we can present a diverse documentary. The first of this series—"How I Met A Dime"—was published in the May-June 2021 issue of *Peyk*. This is the sixth and final part of Mr. Khabazian's story. The Immigration Story column will continue in the next issue of *Peyk* with a new writer.

This is the last episode of my immigration story. It certainly doesn't mean my status all of a sudden changed from an immigrant to a newborn American citizen(!), but I end things here because encouraging other first-generation Iranian immigrants to start writing about their own experiences has been the main purpose of this column—not going through my personal life story.

Living in any host country for a few decades brings several comparisons between the culture of the home and the host countries; these are worth reflecting on and writing about, so I hope our readers are encouraged to send us what they have learned living in a host country.

Going back to my story, I should say working for the "T" family in Texas has been, and still is, one the most pleasant experiences I had in my immigrant life. The company was a very well-managed outlet with a very professional and, at the same time, friendly environment. During the early 1980s, Texas was enjoying an economic boom. The price of oil was skyrocketing on an international level which gave a perfect chance to oil producing states, such as Texas, to pocket large profits. As a result, all businesses, including nursery and landscape companies, were doing phenomenally well.

My main responsibility working for such a great company was to keep hiding my true identity as I promised the nursery owners I would. As a self-proclaimed "Turkish" immigrant, I forced myself to study about Turkey—its currency, population, size, the names of major cities, and a few common words like hello, good morning, and so on. Whenever I was faced with an unthinkable question that I was not prepared for, I used my Persian vocabulary, pronouncing words with a Turkish accent which most of the time was making me laugh. Fortunately, Google was not around at that time for people to search and find out.

The salary I was receiving was more than comfortable for a family of three. For the first time, I could manage saving, afford vacations, move to a nicer apartment, and even buy a brand new Ford Mustang.

The business owners had a ritual of inviting their top salaried employees on a monthly basis to their home or a beach party. That was a great opportunity for me and my family to show them that Iranian nationals were quite different from what the mass media was trying to portray.

When finally, on January 21, 1981, all hostages were freed as a gift to the Ronald Reagan presidency, I felt relieved of enormous tension. I remember walking to Mr. T Junior's office and said:

*"Good afternoon, Ted."*

*"Good afternoon, Steve."*

*"I just wanted to say congratulations."*

*"What for?"* he asked.

*"Hostages are on their way home,"* I replied.

*"Oh, same to you,"* he said while smiling.

Probably only the two of us knew the true reason behind who conversation. He offered me to take a seat and continued:

*"I meant to tell you for a few weeks now that we all are very happy with your performance."*

*"Thank you, Ted, I am very happy to hear that. That means a lot to me."*

The questions about Turkey never stopped, especially after work, when we used to gather at a nearby sports bar for a drink and to play pool. I was very careful to answer all the questions in a politically





correct manner—until everything changed later that week. We were very busy on that Friday afternoon when my direct operation manager came to me and expressed his frustration.

“What’s wrong, Rey?” I asked.

“We are short on labor and a huge plant delivery needs to be made,” he cried.

“No problem, Rey. Can I be of any help?”

“Really, can you?” he asked, surprised.

“Sure, I can!” I said gladly.

“Thanks, man. Go to the big truck and help the driver unload the order at the customer’s address.”

On our way, the driver kept asking usual questions about Turkey which I could easily manage. Once we got to the delivery address, I jumped on top of the truck to unwrap the trees and the driver knocked on the customer’s door. But, before he reached the front door, the homeowner came out, walking toward the truck and looking directly at me on the top.

“Let me guess. Italian?” he asked enthusiastically.

“Yes,” I replied indifferently.

All of a sudden, he started speaking Italian to me!

“Well, my father was Italian, but my mother was from Turkey,” I threw out rapidly.

And to my shock, the customer started to speak Turkish to me! While the driver was standing and staring at me!

“You know, my father was Italian and my mom was Turkish, but I

was born and raised in Shiraz!!” I said without delay, knowing the driver was not going to believe a word of what I said.

“Shey..Raise!, where is that?” he asked unbelievably.

“Oh, it is a small country in the Persian Gulf.”

“Never heard of it,” he replied coldly.

On our way back, the driver got surprisingly quiet and I knew that the company’s employees were going to have a lot to talk about the next day. The genie was out of the bottle and there was nothing I could do to put her back.

Luckily, I was off for the next two days. Monday morning coincided with the great news of the arrival of my new child, a daughter that I always hoped to have. The news might have changed the entire mood and I didn’t hear anything about the Friday episode.

A few months later, my wife and I decided to have a party at our apartment and we invited a few coworkers, including Rey, the operation manager. After having some drinks and dinner, Rey and I went to the balcony to have a cigarette when he turned to me and asked:

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure!” I said, knowing the content of that question.

“Where are you really from? And don’t give me that Turkey baloney.”

“Where do you think I am from?” I replied.

“Eye Ran?” he asked with a sure tone.

“Yes, I am. But please keep it between us. I promised the Ts not to reveal it,” I begged.

“Sure, not to worry. But why didn’t you tell me before?” he asked anxiously.

“Now, let me ask you a question. If I would have told you from the beginning, would you be willing to be my friend for such a long time?”

“Probably not!” he said after a long pause.

After the guests left our house, the thought of leaving Texas seeded in my mind—not only because of my identity being revealed, but mainly because our immigration status seemed locked in the Texas court system with a slim chance of moving forward. When I complained about it during a telephone conversation with a friend who was living in California, he encouraged me to move. It was with deep sadness I left all my friends in Texas, taking another risk of living in yet another unknown land.

California, here we come!





## Freidun Hojabri (1936-2021)

It is with deep sorrow that we learned of the passing of a very special and caring leader, Dr. Freidun Hojabri, in Hamburg, Germany, on December 28, 2021. He was born in 1936 in Abadan where he completed his elementary and high school education. He followed his education in Germany by receiving his degree in chemistry from Munich University, followed by his

doctorate in chemistry from Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in Germany. Upon returning to Tehran, Dr. Hojabri joined the faculty of Sharif University of Technology, serving in different leadership positions up to Vice-Chancellor of the university. After the revolution, he and his wife immigrated to the United States and to San Diego in 1982. Our community and many non-profit organizations here in San Diego benefited from his wisdom and leadership. Dr. Hojabri's efforts were instrumental in international fundraising for building the House of Iran in Balboa Park. He was a member of all our non-profit organizations, attended their events, and contributed to their needs. In the year 2000, Dr. Hojabri established Sharif University of Technology Association and made sure the graduates met semi-annually around the world to create and deepen connections among them.

Dr. Hojabri is survived by his wife Hedwig, son Kurosch, daughter Azita, and three grandchildren. Our deepest condolences to all of them. We became a better community because of him and thank him forever. May he rest in peace.

— Shahri Estakhri



## Jamshid Nowzari

Our friend Jamshid Nowzari passed away unexpectedly in December 2021, leaving behind a pool of tears. He was all about love, family, friendship, hard work, and

music; all those who knew him will miss his joyful presence. He is survived by his son Shayan, a student at UC Santa Cruz, his grieving mother Mrs. Farangis Farzin, and his brother Behnam.

— Farhad Bahrami

**جمشید نوزری** در یک خانواده صمیمی و اهل هنر بختیاری در آبادان بزرگ شد و چهل سال پیش در جوانی به سن دیگو کوچ کرد. از دست دادن خانه و دیار، بعد پدر و برادر بزرگ، ضربه هایی بودند که تحمل کرد و از پا در نیامد. بخشش، مهربانی، سخت کوشی، و عشق به موسیقی از خصائص عمده جمشید بودند. همیشه آماده نواختن موسیقی با دوستان بود، بخصوص موسیقی بندری. چهل سال خاطرات خوش با هم داریم. یادش گرامی و تسلیت به خانواده داغدارش.

— فرهاد بهرامی

## Hossein Babakhani

### حسین باباخانی

من عقابم وطنم، فرق فلک مسکن من  
یاکریم وار، نروم لانه به ویرانه کنم

(ترلان)

حسین باباخانی کُندری، متخلص به "ترلان"، و بزرگ خاندان باباخانی و قوم کُندودی ها، در سال ۱۳۱۱ در آذربایجان متولد شد. وی در عنفوان جوانی با داشتن رویایی بزرگ، به تهران آمده و با سالها تلاش و نوآوری "کافه قنادی آرات" را تاسیس نمود. کافه قنادی آرات، با بیش از چهل سال فعالیت خود، کام بسیاری از تهرانی ها و شهرستانی های دورو نزدیک را شیرین کرد، به طوری که برخی از مشتریان می گفتند "عید بدون شیرینی آرات، عید نیست". ازدواج وی با شریک زندگی، نقطه عطفی در زندگی او بود، که حاصلش پنج فرزند میباشد، که همیشه به آن ها افتخار میکرد. در سالهای مهاجرت، با نامه نگاری به سازمانهای مختلف از جمله سازمان ملل و سازمان جهانی غذا طرح هایی جهت ریشه کن کردن فقر و گرسنگی ارایه کرد که مورد تقدیر این سازمان ها قرار گرفت. او سرودن اشعار خود را با شعر "وطنم" و با تخلص "ترلان" آغاز نمود، و از ایشان چندین دفتر شعر به جا مانده است. وی که همسری مهربان، پدری فداکار و پدربزرگی دوست داشتنی و دوستی همراه بود، در نهایت، در ۱۷ نوامبر سال ۲۰۲۱، در یک صبح پاییزی و در کنار خانواده خود، دیده از جهان فرو بست و به دیدار معشوق شتافت. روحیه شاد و آوازهای زیبای او همیشه گرمی بخش مجالس شادی بخش دلهای اقوام و دوستان بود. یادش همیشه گرمی و خاطرات خوبش همیشه جاویدان خواهد بود.

— امیر فرشاد باباخانی

## احمد کلاهزاده

### Ahmad Kolahzadeh

سفرت به خیر اَما  
تو و دوستی خدا را  
چو از این کویر وحشت  
به سلامتی گذشتی  
به شکوفه ها به باران  
برسان سلام ما را



خانواده های کلاهزاده و ایروانیان در رئای بزرگ خاندان، احمد کلاهزاده به سوگ نشستند.

سفر این درگذشته عزیزحامی هنرمندان و جوانان؛ که خانه ایشان همواره محفل موسیقیدانان و هنرمندان بوده است، همراه با بدرقه فامیل و دوستان و دعای خیر کسانی که عمری در سایه توجهات ایشان بوده اند گرامی داشته و برای بازماندگان آرزوی صبوری داریم

— مریم ایروانیان

## خوانندگان گرامی:

در صورت اطلاع داشتن از خبری که دانستن آن برای ایرانیان سن دیگو مهم است، با ما تماس بگیرید، چه خوب و چه بد: خبر فوت، تولد، ازدواج، موفقیت و هر آنچه هست را همراه با یک عکس به آدرس [pcc@pccsd.org](mailto:pcc@pccsd.org) بر ایمان ارسال نمایید.

با سپاس  
پیک





**Melody and Melika Khoshneviszadeh** both attended the Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD) from 2011 to 2015 as students and then volunteered as teacher assistants for several years. They were also both active members of the Persian Dance Academy. Melody graduated from high school in 2020 and was accepted to University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Melika graduated from high school in 2021 and is now attending Cornell University in New York.



**Public Announcement**



**SDG&E RESIDENTIAL CONTENT PACKAGE FEBRUARY 2022**

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- A requirement for permanent space heating or cooling due to paraplegia, quadriplegia, hemiplegia, multiple sclerosis, scleroderma, a compromised immune system or a life-threatening illness.
- Required use of a life-support device, such as an aerosol tent, apnea monitor, kidney dialysis machine, motorized wheelchair or respirator (devices used for therapy don't qualify; only medical devices that sustain life or are needed for mobility).

To get a Medical Baseline Allowance application and more information, visit [sdge.com/medical](http://sdge.com/medical). Eligibility requirements include having a physician sign your application to certify the medical need.

**نوروزتان پیروز ۱۴۰۱**

**House of Iran Celebrating Nowruz**

**Food, Music, Dance**

**Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Balboa Park San Diego**  
11:00 AM to 6:00 PM



**Shally Zomorodi**  
FOX 5 Morning News Anchor  
**MC**



**DJ Mohsen**



**Farisha**  
**Music**



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