

The
Fanfare
of
Citrus

Celebrating Citrus in Turkey

Natty Mark Samuels

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Dedication

to

Annabelle Stoodley

for her support of African School

and its Citrus teaching

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Did you ever see an elephant,
Made from mandarin and lemon?
Or a lion with mane,
Of grapefruit and orange?
Tell me dear reader,
Did you ever get close to Citrus Heaven?

Believe me, for I tell you no lie,
No, I am not kidding.
There are animals such as this,
Appearing in November,
In a city that is called Mersin.

Come with me,
To the great menagerie,
Celebration of orange and yellow.

The shark will not bite you,
The dragon left its fire at home.
Come little one,
They will not harm you:
They are not the wild ones who roam.

Orange and yellow confetti,
Bunting of those colours everywhere.
Men and women on stilts,
Dancers and musicians,
All part of the citrus fanfare.

They come from all over,
To a place called Cukurova,
Celebration of orange and yellow.

Yes, they come from all over, to Mersin in Cukurova, to southern Turkey on the Mediterranean. Lemons to dress the salad of tomatoes, bulgar wheat, cucumber, red onion, walnuts, parsley and pomegranate seeds; lemons to embellish the fish, alongside "pepper, red onion and bay leaves." And as they come from all over to celebrate citrus in Mersin, so the fruit of Mersin goes all over also! To Holland, Russia, Ukraine and Romania; to Germany, Britain, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. And in other parts of Cukurova, in Adana and in Hatay, they produce oranges, grapefruit and mandarins. The nurturing of the citrus family, happens also in the area around the Antalya province and in the Aegean region, but the main area of citrus growth, is in the region called Cukurova.

In a street in Mersin, a foreign tv journalist stops two friends, who wave to the camera.

Interviewer: So what are some of the highlights for you, of the Mersin Citrus Festival.

1st Voice: So many! Where shall I start? Well, one of the outstanding aspects for me, as it is everywhere, is seeing the various participants from around the world, adorned in their national dress: people from all over. Such as Chile and Ghana...

2nd Voice: Thailand and Croatia

1st Voice: Greece and Algeria

2nd Voice: Kazakhstan and Serbia

1st Voice: Azerbaijan and Slovakia

2nd Voice: Montenegro and India

1st Voice : Iraq and Moldavia

2nd Voice: Brazil and Indonesia

1st Voice : Georgia and Albania

2nd Voice: Bosnia-Herzegovina

1st Voice : Kosovo and Romania

2nd Voice : Belarus and Bulgaria

They laugh together with the journalist.

Interviewer: That was great! You should be a double act! ***The two young men look at each other, grinning.*** So I can see that the cultural element is just as important to you as the citrus celebration.

1st Voice: For sure! For a few days, its like the world steps in! Most people, when they think of Turkey, think of Istanbul. Yet every year in November, Mersin receives visitors from all over the globe.

2nd Voice: We feel honoured to be the recipients of such a display of culture: we can see music and dance from all the continents. And as performers ourselves, we like to support and learn from others.

Interviewer: I had a feeling you were creative spirits! So what do you create?

2nd Voice: We'll, we've just began to, for want of a better term, to "experiment" with traditional Turkish music and the roots reggae music of Jamaica. Bringing the music of our strings, such as the oud and the lute, and playing it over the top of the reggae basslines, with our vocals also. He plays bass and flute and I play oud and the lute.

1st Voice: We hope to play here next year:

Interviewer: Well I hope I'll be here!.. Any other highlights?

2nd Voice: For us that live here, its all a highlight!

1st Voice: Yes, we like living here and seeing our city come alive! All along the promenade, as far as the eye can see, there are people. ***Pointing backwards and forwards.*** And there are clowns and puppets, entertaining the children; and everyone is awed by the acrobatic displays, in the air and on the sea...

2nd Voice: People sitting on the rocks, beside the promenade, taking in the sun and looking out to sea; others, having their photos taken with the citrus sculptures. People strolling and smiling, meeting others from the other side of the world and laughing with them....

1st Voice: As well as the red and white of our national colours, we see the flags of the globe, all around Mersin. We are proud of what happens here every year.

Interviewer: And so you should be: its lovely to be here. So glad I got this assignment! Hope I get it next year! ***They laugh together.*** So each of you, tell me your favourite citrus dishes?

1st Voice: Well, a lemon and pepper salmon salad to start with....

2nd Voice: And for dessert, either lemon and orange scones or slices of lemon cake, with the option of lemon ice cream.

Interviewer: Sounds wonderful!

1st Voice: It is! And there are all kinds of citrus treats to try: of orange, mandarin and grapefruit, as well as lemon.

2nd Voice: Cocktails, smoothies, punches and juices: all along the promenade and throughout the town.

Interviewer: I intend to sample as much as I can! It's been great talking to you: hope to see you next year - and good luck with the music.

1st Voice: Thank you: bless you.

2nd Voice! Yes, thank you and hope to see you next year.

They shake hands and the two young men and the film crew, wander into the crowds, going in opposite directions.

Sources

Cukorova University

Koala Productions