



MEET THE FAMILY

Jehan and Haytham's family are Kurds from Syria who came to Canada in October of 2016. They are the only Yazidi family in Windsor. They have four children: Badri (12) who loves soccer, video games and is great at taking care of animals; Evan (9) who also likes soccer and creates amazing art; Lucinda (3.5) who loves singing and playing with dolls; and baby Hameed (7 months) who loves bouncing in his swing jumper. Jehan's parents, Subhi and Benfshe, live in Windsor, too. They are a very close-knit family and spend a lot of their free time together, visiting local attractions like Point Pelee and its beautiful beaches, Thiessen Orchards (Evan's favourite place in Canada!), zoos, etc. They all love animals (especially pigeons) and have an adorable cat named Meme.

BEST MEMORIES FROM SYRIA

In Syria, the family lived in Afrin where they had a beautiful stone house on a hill surrounded by orchards of fig, almond, apricot, cherry and olive trees. Haytham's parents had a farm where they grew vegetables. Jehan told us that she and her husband moved to Aleppo after they got married but every Friday they would visit their family in Afrin and spend the whole day together barbecuing under the olive and almond trees, and enjoying the views of Afrin mountains.



Jehan's family house in Syria.

JOURNEY TO CANADA

The decision to leave Syria was not an easy one for Jehan and Haytham. The journey was risky but they wanted to raise their family in a safe place. Leaving everything behind, they and their two small children (Badri and Evan) were smuggled over the border to Turkey. After spending two and a half years in Turkey, they finally arrived in Canada. Jehan's parents joined them after seven months. Upon arrival, Hotel Dieu doctors saved Jehan's father's leg which he had seriously injured in an accident in Turkey.

FAVOURITE HOLIDAY TRADITION

Their favourite holiday is Newroz which is celebrated on March 21. We learned that it is the most important Kurdish holiday. According to a legend that Jehan and Haytham told us, the land used to be ruled by an evil king who made people's lives miserable. A brave man conquered the king and then lit a large bonfire on top of the mountain to tell all the people that they were free. Since then, Kurdish people traditionally light bonfires and candles during the festival of Newroz. Jehan and Haytham's family always get together for Newroz with their friends, light candles and enjoy food, singing and dancing – all outdoors as it also marks the arrival of spring.

FAMILY RECIPE

SHISH BARAK

This is one of the family's favourite dishes. The person who makes the most delicious shish barak is Jehan's mom, Benfshe. It takes a lot of time and patience to make but everyone, especially Evan, loves it when grandma brings it!

INGREDIENTS:

Dough

- 5 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 teaspoon yeast
- 2 teaspoon sugar

Meat stuffing

- 1 pound ground lamb
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste
- Cinnamon powder to taste
- Pistachio
- Olive oil
- Cilantro, chopped

Stew

- 5 cups yogurt
- 2 cups water
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- Dried mint
- Salt to taste

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix all the dough ingredients together, knead, cover and let it rest for 2 hours.
- Fry onions with olive oil, then add lamb meat, salt, pepper and cinnamon.
- Add pistachios and cilantro. Set aside to cool.
- Roll the dough and use a cup to cut the dough into round pieces.
- Place meat mixture into each of the pieces of dough, fold in half and seal the edges. Fold in half again pressing the corners together.
- In a large pot, combine yogurt, and the rest of the ingredients for the stew.
- Bring to boil, put the dumplings in and simmer until cooked.
- Serve with rice.

LIFE IN CANADA

The Sevkos love their life in Canada. They have lots of friends here, a nice house, and big dreams. Haytham would like one day to open his own car shop and Jehan's dream is to study to become a medical lab technician. For her, the best thing about Canada is that you can change the course of your life any time regardless of your age. Jehan's father is grateful for the wonderful health care he received in Canada, and his wife said: "every day I love Canada!". Badri shared that he liked Canadian schools because teachers treat children with respect, and his brother, Evan, said that Canada is great because everyone can be free.