

## SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT TURKEY.

By Philip Madden

Turkey is a land of many contrasts, **straddling** Asia and Europe but belonging to neither it is a country with a unique identity formed at the **gateway** of two continents.

The modern Turkish state was founded on the ashes of the defeated Ottoman Empire. It is impossible to talk about modern Turkey without talking about Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey.

Ataturk gave a new **lease** of life to the Turkish nation by setting in motion a number of reforms to westernise the country. Firstly he outlawed the **fez**, a traditional headress of Turkish men, as well as the **veil** so that women were not made to feel inferior in the new Turkish state. Next he changed the Turkish alphabet from its Arabic form to a new Latin one, to bring Turkey into line with Europe, the whole country was ordered to learn the new language within a year or face prison !! He introduced western clothing and ideas and opened new schools and universities to produce the new model Turk. Perhaps his most important reform was to make Turkey a **secular** state so that religion became a personal moral guide and not a form of government. Today Ataturk's portrait hangs on the walls of schools, public buildings, shops and businesses all over Turkey and it is wise, when visiting Turkey not to say anything too critical of the man. Even though he died in 1938 he is **revered** and loved by Turks everywhere.

Homelife is central to Turkish culture. Families visit each other twice or three times a week, and as with everything in Turkey there is a formal protocol to the proceedings. The visit begins with Turkish coffee being made and served to the guests, personally speaking I never really developed a taste for Turkish coffee as it is very thick and strong, after drinking it my head would **buzz!** Anyway after the coffee (yum yum?!) it is time to eat. First, soup is served, maybe **lentil** soup which was my favourite or, if you are unlucky, **tripe** soup, either way as a guest your responsibility is to eat whatever your host gives you, not to do so can be taken as an insult.

After the soup comes the main meal which could be roasted chicken with rice, or **kofte** (meatballs) with rice, or brown lentils with rice, or rice with rice ☺

Turkish cuisine is vegetable based as meat is expensive, meat dishes are usually served in Ramazan or when guests have been invited to the host's home. Salad is served with everything.

Next is the desert which is usually a cream filled **pastry** called borek or syrup saturated baklava which sits in your stomach like a lead weight.

After everyone has stuffed themselves you will retire to the living room where Turkish tea is served. The tea is served in little tulip shaped glasses, one or two lumps of sugar are added to sweeten the taste. Usually people drink two or three glasses of tea after eating a meal.

The last thing to be served is fruit. The type of fruit served depends on which season it is, for example in winter apples are served, in summer grapes or watermelon will be offered. By this time everybody is full but the idea why fruit is served is to aid the **digestion**.

Turks love entertaining and food is an important factor. A lot of time and effort goes into preparing meals and all the ingredients must be fresh and in season. Guests are expected to eat whatever they are given and to praise their host 's cooking skills.

#### Some useful Turkish phrases

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Merhaba        | Hello   |
| Nasilsiniz ?   | How are you ?   |
| Iyim           | Fine  |
| Fena degil     | Not bad   |
| Iyi gunlar     | Good day  |
| Iyi aksamlar   | Good evening  |
| Iyi geceler    | Good night  |
| Gunaydin       | Good morning  |
| Hos            | nice,pretty, lovely etc:  |
| Guzel          | good,fine, brilliant etc:   |
| Kotu           | Bad, awful,terrible   |
| Tesekkurler    | Thank you   |
| Cok seviyorum  | I like it a lot- example : Futbol cok seviyorum ( I really like football) |
| Cok sevmiyorum | I don't like it . - Futbol cok sevmiyorum ( I don't like football)        |
| Insallah       | God willing ( when you want something to happen)                          |
| Masallah       | God protect it ( when you want something to stay as it is )               |

I would like to end by saying that Turkey is sometimes given a negative image by the media, while it is true that the country suffers from many political and social problems, this does not distract from the fact that Turks are extremely hospitable and welcoming people. Foreigners are usually treated with great respect because the **notion** of guest is held in high regard, in fact an old Turkish phrase describes guests as being sent from God and are therefore holy.

## Vocabulary

**straddling** – to straddle – rozciągać się, sięgać

**gateway** – droga, furtka

**lease** – tu: poprawić

**veil** – welon, zasłona

**secular** - świecki

**revered** – czczony

**buzz** - szum

**lentil** - soczewica

**tripe** - flaki

**pastry** – ciastko, ciastko z owocami

**digestion** – trawienie, układ trawienny

**notion** – wrażenie, myśl, pogląd, idea

