

'YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I THANK GOD THAT WE ARE HERE IN CANADA'

Continued from front

could hug all of Canada."

Baroudi recalled the incident, which for her symbolizes Canadian kindness, with her voice breaking almost to tears.

The mother didn't have to experience the full plight of what her people went through during times of war in Syria, as she moved to Canada from the United Arab Emirates with her family.

She lived 18 years in the UAE and three years in Qatar. However, these countries don't have any immigration system and don't naturalize residents, even if they trace back three generations of family living there.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, she said, "You don't know how much I thank God that we are here in Canada, we are lucky to be here." She also remembers those who are left behind in Syria.

"In Canada there is peace, diversity, respect for all religions, cultures," she said, describing June's brutal incident in London, Ont. as an "isolated" one.

Cherishing multiculturalism and respect of different cultures is also noted by her 26-year-old colleague Arlinda Zapata from Colombia. Both of them go to the same Welcome Centre in Vaughan.

"I really like it because we are multicultural, so everybody understands that we are totally different, and try to feel empathy," Zapata said.

While Zapata misses Colombia, she likes Canada.

"I really like it because you learn a little bit from every culture. I have a lot of friends from Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Chinese people, so it's really nice to learn from each other."

Azra Jahani, 48, who immigrated with her husband



Steve Somerville/Metroland

Arlinda Zapata, from Colombia, has been in Canada for three years. She and her son, Adam, are happy to be here.

and son in October 2019, right before the pandemic, was a practising pediatrician in Pakistan, her country of origin, and previously in Saudi Arabia.

Jahani chose Vaughan because she has some relatives here. She and her husband, who is currently working as an Uber driver, chose to Canada because Pakistan's economy is sinking and experiencing a crisis.

"It's a good multicultural country, people are living peacefully. There is no culture of racism, that's why I like it."

Baroudi and Jahani deem the country to be great for their own children's future.

All of these women are ambitious and have career goals in mind.

Baroudi wants to perfect her English, and get the Canadian equivalent of her Bachelor's in Science so she can start tutoring. Jahani didn't take her medical exams yet, but wants to improve her English and get a related job in the health-care industry. Zapata used to work as an office administrator and wants to find a job in her field here after her maternity leave has ended. She now has a 17-month-old baby.

"I understand that right now, I have to focus on getting better in the English language," said Zapata, who is taking full-time classes at the Welcome Centre.

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services continues to provide all the same services amid the pandemic virtually.

In 2016, a vast majority — 88 per cent — of immigrants in York chose the region's southern municipalities — Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan

However, Vaughan was the only York municipality to experience a decline (three per cent) in its recent immigrant population between 2006 and 2016.

Baroudi said her family chose Vaughan due to its proximity to York University where her daughter studies engineering, and because the city's manufacturing hub is suitable for her husband's business in marbles.

STORY BEHIND

STORY: Vaughan's Welcome Centre has helped reporter Dina Al-Shibeeb get in touch with Razan Baroudi and Arlinda Zapata. She also contacted Azra Jahani through Muslim Women of Vaughan's group.



Bring a red and white dessert to the party

A chilled summer dessert is a great way to celebrate Canada's birthday and this one features local strawberries and Ontario goat cheese that achieve a Canada Day worthy red and white effect. Fragrant fresh local strawberries create a tasty topping for this cold creamy dessert featured in the recipe section of the Ontario Farm Fresh website.

Method: In a bowl and using electric hand mixer, beat together cheese, sugar, cream and liqueur until smooth and fluffy. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or until well chilled.



Strawberries: Meanwhile, in a bowl, stir together strawberries, sugar, vanilla and orange rind until well coated.

Divide cheese mixture into bowls and top with strawberries.

Makes 6 servings.

Make-ahead: Goat cheese mixture can be made up to three days ahead.

For a richer and creamier taste, let the cheese mixture come to room temperature to serve.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: n/a

Per serving: About 276 cal, 10 g pro, 14 g total fat (9 g sat fat), 25 g carb, 2 g fibre, 36 mg chol, 189 mg sodium. %RDI: iron 9%, calcium 8%, vit A 19%, vit C 83%
Source: Ontario Goat Cheese (ontariogoatcheese.ca)
Find more recipes at www.farmfreshontario.com.

Strawberries and Chevre Romanof

- 1 large log (10 oz/300 g) Ontario chevre (soft, unripened goat cheese), at room temperature
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) 35% whipping cream
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) orange liqueur

Strawberries:

- 3 cups (750 mL) sliced fresh strawberries
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) grated orange rind

HAPPY CANADA DAY



Please follow all public health guidelines to help keep our communities safe.



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