



...Culture, arts, & heritage of Azerbaijan & the Caucasus

For Immediate Release

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Washington, D.C. January 8, 2011 More than 90 individuals participated in the Karabakh Foundation's First Annual Charity Dinner, December 19, 2010, at the Beacon Hotel in Washington, D.C.

The evening's proceedings mirrored the Foundation's efforts to educate Americans about Azerbaijani culture. The chef of the Beacon Hotel prepared the hotel's first-ever Azerbaijani meal, which included traditional Azerbaijani meals with delightful appetizers such as fresh hummus, baba ghanoush, spinach dip, tabbouleh, and an herb and radish cucumber dip. Guests began their culinary adventure with sips of Azerbaijan's popular yogurt drink, *ayran*.

Chaired by Leyla Mammadli, the event included Foundation board members Dr. Adil Baguirov and Dr. John Vafai as well as many distinguished guests from different walks of life. Ms. Mammadli was the first Azeri woman to have been invited to attend the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Bologna and is currently a student at SAIS. She brought a deep appreciation of Azerbaijani culture that permeated all aspects of the evening's program. Ms. Mammadli brought several fellow foreign-affairs graduate students to the evening's event.

Ms. Mammadli opened the event with an enlightening speech on the importance of building bridges in today's world among Azerbaijan and the United States. Her speech was followed by delicious Azerbaijani entrees, such as dolmas (stuffed grape leaves), chicken kebabs, lime kebabs, lamb meatballs, and gutab.

Other features of the gala evening included an outstanding performance by renowned musician Imamyar Hasanov, who introduced many guests for the first time to the Azerbaijani lyrical musical form of *mugham*. The evening also included a presentation by culinary historian Amy Riolo, who is finalizing work on the Foundation's upcoming *The Cuisine of Karabakh: Recipes, Memories, and Dining Traditions from Azerbaijan's Cradle of Culture*.

The night's speakers and lively entertainment underscored the beauty and uniqueness of Azerbaijani culture and the Karabakh Foundation's intent to involve Americans in Azerbaijani culture. Executive

Director Altman announced a series of art exchanges, a chess program, and many more exciting programs planned for 2011.

The formal program included a presentation of “Spirit of Karabakh” awards to journalist Shafag Mehraliyeva and videographer Anar Garibov, who have been instrumental in launching the Azerbaijani Radio Hour: The Voice of the Karabakh Foundation. The Azerbaijani Radio Hour reaches millions of listeners each week.

Dinner participants had the opportunity to bid, via silent auction, on a week’s stay at a lovely home in Rehoboth Beach, Del., as the result of a generous donation by Yavar Rzayev. Several participants received door prizes, which included, among other items, tickets to the Foundation’s March 3 concert with the Continuum Ensemble in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution.

At evening’s end, Foundation volunteers received certificates of appreciation for contributing to the Karabakh Foundation’s many successes in its first six months. All attendees received materials about upcoming Foundation events and programs—including a recipe from the Foundation’s upcoming cookbook—the first detailed cookbook of Azerbaijani cuisine to be produced in the United States.



Guests left to right: Azer Mursagulov, Sevil Mursagulov, Karen DeBakey, George DeBakey. Bottom row: Aysel DeBakey.

Imamyar Hasanov playing traditional Azerbaijani mugham on the kamancha. Mr. Hasanov, who enjoys a fan following worldwide, is working with the Karabakh Foundation on several projects in 2011.



After dinner, guests continued to enjoy our transformed Azerbaijani dinner venue by engaging in a lively chat while indulging in tea and coffee. Tea has special cultural significance in Azerbaijan and is considered the national beverage.



*Left to right, top row: Ali Novin , Nijat Jalil, Ikram Jalil, Rufat Sadigov
Left to right, bottom row: Elchin Adbullayev, Leyla Mammadli, and Diana Cohen Altman
Mrs. Altman is holding the Karabakh Foundation's first publication in the Karabakh: Looking Back, Looking Forward series, a calendar for 2011.*



Left to right: Yavar Rzayev, artist and donor to the Karabakh Foundation silent auction; Amy Riolo, culinary historian and author of the Karabakh Foundation Azerbaijani cookbook; Maher El Tanbedawy, Foundation supporter; Abol Bahadori, artist; Dr. Adil Baguirov, Co-Founder and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Karabakh Foundation.

About the Karabakh Foundation

The Karabakh Foundation seeks to increase awareness and understanding in the United States of the cultural heritage and traditions of the country of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus area, and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. While coalescing significant artistic and scholarly talent, the Foundation is nurturing a new generation of artists and scholars toward important accomplishments.

The Foundation serves as a dynamic facilitator and clearinghouse raising the public profile of Azerbaijan, its Karabakh region, and the Caucasus region in general. Main activities include preserving and disseminating cultural content via archival collecting, public programs, publications, exhibitions, speaking forums, international collaborations, scholarly exchange, artistic sponsorship, and related venues.

Foundation support comes primarily from Khazar University, the first private university in Azerbaijan and one of the country's leading institutions of higher learning. Support also comes from the U.S.-based Allaverdy Foundation. Additional information about the Karabakh Foundation may be found at www.karabakhfoundation.org.

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