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## Persian New Year

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## **Persian New Year**

### **Customs**

**Informant:** Sepanta Dor is a good friend of mine. We were introduced to each other when I took over a contract for a room in Sepanta's apartment. Over the year I lived with Sepanta I got to know the man well. Sepanta was accepted to do his civil engineer PhD with Utah State University. This led Sepanta to immigrating to the United States from the country Iran. Living with Sepanta meant that I got to learn about Persian customs.

**Context:** I interviewed Sepanta in his home in Logan, Utah on October 27, 2018. We were sitting on the couch in his front room. The weather was warm despite being late October. When asked about any memorable customs Sepanta remembers about home, he thought for a second, before mentioning Persian New Year. The country of Iran has a very rich and ancient culture. Iran is the heart of what used to be the Persian Empire. As a result, the customs behind Persian New Years are among some of the oldest traditions in practice today. In Iran, the new year is determined by the alignment of the cosmos. Persian New Years is always in March; the date and time varies from year to year. During Persian New Year's, friends and family get together to eat good food and celebrate. A common dish eaten during Persian New Year is called kebab. Kebab consists of cuts of meat and vegetables cook on spits over charcoal. In Sepanta's family meats and vegetables were always cooked on different spits. Kebabs were always served over rice with a side of flat bread. Drinking during this holiday is never done publicly. Drinking at all in Iran is against the law and will result in eighty lashes (being whipped). This does not mean that there is no drinking, it is just done in secret.

**Text:** [What is a common tradition you had in Iran?] My favorite was Persian New Year. So Persian New Year, the thing about it, is huh it is the starting of the new year, so every year it is different time of day or night. Sometimes it is at 3:00 in the morning, sometimes it is 7:00 in the morning, sometimes it is noon you know depending on the time of the new year. Does that make sense? You know because of the solar system and stuff? [Yes, what month is New Year normally in for you?] It is always in March first day of spring basically. That is the celebration of Persian New year. So, depending on the time, sometimes we don't even eat because the time is getting new is a time we just don't want to eat. Like 3:00 in the morning, you just don't eat then. [What is a common dish you eat during Persian New Year?] I would say probably kebabs is the most

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Logan, Utah

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famous one. It is cooked on charcoal, so basically... it depends either you use ground meat, or you use just pieces of meat. You do not really marinate them, you use diced onions that you put in the ground meat. You season it with salt, pepper, turmeric, some saffron sometimes. That is the same seasoning for kebabs that is not ground meat. Sometimes people use the onion juice to season the kebabs. You leave it in that juice for an hour and it makes it really tender and just delicious. Vegetables were cooked in the same way, just not on the same stick. Things like tomatoes, bell peppers, even onions. Once they are all cooked you would eat everything over rice. Flat bread is eaten as a side.

**Texture:** Sepanta was excited to share his memories about Persian New Year with me. His culture has always been a source of pride for Sepanta. Sepanta is always happy to share these experiences with me. Kebabs are a dish Sepanta made while I lived with him. Although done in Logan, Utah, the way Sepanta cooked the kebabs is the same way he would in Iran. While grilling his kebabs, Sepanta would invite the neighbors over. The kebabs would be eaten with friends just like how it is done on Persian New Year.

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