

# Arts & Living

## Rated SR Film Fest New York Kicks off 2nd season With Launch Party

NEW YORK – Following a successful inaugural year with 55 films from 18 countries, Rated SR Socially Relevant Film Festival New York is gearing up for its second edition with a gathering at Bettolona restaurant on Wednesday, September 3. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet the winning film directors, cast members and their colleagues as well as network with important industry guests. There will be prizes to win and passes to the festival to be given out.

Founded by award-winning actor, filmmaker and curator Nora Armani in order to promote positive social change through films covering a range of social issues, this year's Rated SR film festival has two special spotlight sections titled 100 Years of Genocide & Women Filmmakers of MENA respectively.

"I know many Middle Eastern and MENA women filmmakers who are really talented and make films that deal with socially relevant issues not limited to the status of women only," said Armani. "I have always wanted to present their work to U.S. audiences and we thought this would be a good time to do it."

This year's festival will also shed light on the atrocities of genocide that are ruthlessly carried



Nora Armani

out to the present day. The festival provides a platform to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide during World War I and honors the sacred memory of its victims in a context that is much more universal and international by juxtaposing it to the Holocaust, the Ethnic Cleansing Acts in Eastern Europe, Rwanda, Sudan and others.

"There are many nations that have suffered the fate of the Armenians to various degrees," said Armani. "It is important to put all of that into context and show that impunity encourages further acts of Genocide."

Reflecting on the current situation of Christians in Iraq, Armani likens it to the sufferings of Armenians one hundred years ago.

Rated SR promotes and provides exposure to its films into a wider viewership by accompanying the winning filmmakers beyond the festival week. This year, Rated SR took seven of the programmed documentaries to Cannes for the Cannes Film Festival Doc Corner. The Grand Prize winning film "Small Small Thing" had its weeklong release in June as part of the prize at the Quad Cinema and received positive coverage in the New York Times and Village Voice, among other respectable publications. The winning documentary Not Who We Are obtained a DVD-VOD distribution by Cinema Libre Studio and three of the six selected shorts from the festival's slate are already distributed on IndiePix.

At its core, Rated SR films must relay a positive uplifting message even when dealing with social ills.

"I strongly believe that if a film is made well, and it has an interesting social or human angle, it does not need to rely on gratuitous violence, crime, drugs, nor does it need to glamorize violence through exaggerated special effects in order to become commercially viable," said Armani. "By offering a platform to filmmakers who choose to make socially relevant films that are also entertaining, we encourage them to make more films of that kind. Film submissions are now open. We look forward to hearing from filmmakers."

Submission details may be found on <http://www.ratedsrfilms.org>

The launch party for the second edition of the Socially Relevant Film Festival will take place on Wednesday, September 3, from 6 to 10 p.m. at Bettolona restaurant, 3143 Broadway. No tickets will be sold at the door. To reserve and purchase tickets, go to <https://sorelevantbettolona.eventbrite.com> or email [ratedsrfilms@gmail.com](mailto:ratedsrfilms@gmail.com)



"Queen of Quince" Barbara Ghazarian

## Fans of Quince Promote The Uncommon Fruit

CLOVIS, Calif. (*Appeal-Democrat*) – Even in fruit-productive California, sources of the fragrant quince fruit are limited, but a few determined growers produce it and provide it for consumer enjoyment

Sometimes described as a fuzzy apple, its ardent fans are relentless in their promotion of the golden globe of fruits. Like apples and pears, it carries its seeds in a core, is produced by an expansive tree, ripens in the fall and has ornamental relatives that grow on vines.

By Don Curlee

Recently, the quince has gained a reputation for making a unique cider and spicy wines produced in the mountains of Santa Cruz County. But raw product for crushing is basically produced elsewhere, even on small plots as far away as rural Oregon.

But customers for the fresh product, many of them in Eastern Canada, count on quince grown in the Terra Bella area in southeastern Tulare County. One grower there, considered major by quince industry standards, has been supplying the market for several years from 26 acres of the astringent fruit.

Although quince has been a solid source of revenue for him, and expansion is on his mind, the fruit ranked 45th of the top 45 fruit crops listed in Tulare County. Production in 2013 amounted to \$1.95 million.

The best chance of finding quince locally in the fresh state is at scattered farm stands and markets that dot Fresno and Tulare counties. One of them, the Vineyard Farmers Market, occupies a popular urban location in Fresno, where operator Richard Erganian proudly maintains a display of quince every year during its short season. Specialty grocery stores such as Whole Foods can be sources as well.

However, limited supplies and minimal growers do not reduce the enthusiasm that true fans of quince feel and express. One of the most vocal and persistent is Barbara Ghazarian of Pacific Grove. She so associates with the fruit that she calls herself the Queen of Quince.

Ghazarian has written three books about quince, with recipes and history. A graduate of Wellesley College in molecular biology, she enjoys public appearances that allow her to discuss the long history of quince in Middle Eastern countries and its origins in locations not far from the Garden of Eden, if anybody can ever pinpoint that.

She points out that old world families cherished a quince tree almost as much as a member of the family. Boiling a batch of chopped-up quince brings its pectin to the fore, used then in canning fruits and for thickening and stretching other food dishes.

At the US Department of Agriculture Experiment station in Corvallis, Ore., John Postman admits that the quince has limited appeal, although one of his assignments is to maintain a focus on its potential and the broader possibilities for quince wood as a rootstock for breeding purposes.

The relatively wide range of negative responses leave Ghazarian undaunted. From her exalted throne room in Pacific Grove she has joined with the California Rare Fruit Growers to declare 2014 as the year of the quince.

Her heirloom approach is compatible with the slow food, sustainable food movement and the fans of old fashioned cooking she refers to as fruit nerds.

Ghazarian was a special guest speaker at The Quince Revival Swells – 2014 Festival of Fruit in Portland, Ore., August 6-9.

She talked about how to prepare such delicacies as candied quince, quince jam and chicken and quince stew. For the more adventurous, she emphasized the favorites of quince-orange pickles and a medley of quince chutneys, compotes, cobblers and sweets.

## Vartanian Datian's Recipe Named as Editor's Choice in June *Sunset* Magazine

LAS VEGAS – Christine Vartanian Datian, a resident of Las Vegas, is the daughter of Alice Vartanian and the late Arthur Vartanian of Fresno. Her latest recipe, "Grilled Chicken and Bulgur Salad," was featured in the June 2014 *Sunset* magazine as the Editor's Selection and received a \$250 prize.

She is known for her many recipes that have been published in *Sunset* and *Cooking Light* magazines. Several of her Armenian recipes can be found at the popular [theArmenianKitchen.com](http://theArmenianKitchen.com) website based in Florida. She has been published in the *Fresno Bee* and the *Armenian Reporter* newspapers.

Datian attributes her accomplishments and great interest in writing, cooking and creating recipes to her mother, Alice, and late grandmother, Mrs. Levon Sarkisian from Los Angeles and Lowell, Mass.

"My mother and grandmother were loving, energetic and generous women and mothers who took pride in making outstanding dishes and recipes for our family celebrations, parties, and special events throughout our lives; I learned by watching and listening to them both laugh, talk (in Armenian and Turkish) and work together in the kitchen at our home in Fresno; they instilled a great attention to detail and interest in Middle Eastern and traditional Armenian flavors, ingredients, and cooking techniques at an early age," she adds. "They really cooked with love, and that made all the difference..."

"I can still taste my grandmother's Armenian green bean *fasoulia* stew she made for our family when she visited Fresno each summer, with fresh green beans, tomatoes, peppers, garlic, onions, spices, fresh mint and lamb. It was a feast all by itself. And her buttery, sweet baklava melted in your mouth, a dessert my family remembers to this day..."

Her grandmother, Pepay Sarkisian, who was born in Adana, Turkey, endured a very turbulent and tragic childhood; she was in an orphanage at a young age, and survived with the fortitude to ultimately come to America with her new husband, Levon, a successful barber, and to have a home, a family business, and to raise their family of three children in Lowell with many other new immigrants at the time.

Datian's mother celebrated her 85th birthday this spring and is known for her superb *yalanche*, *dolma*, rice and bulgur pilaf, cheese boureg, and specialty cookies, nut breads, *gata*, biscotti and desserts, including her celebrated Armenian *shakar-ishe* or sugar cookies, she adds.

Christine graduated from California State University, Fresno (CSUF) with BA and MA Degrees, and worked in marketing and advertising in Fresno, San Francisco and in Reno for Harrah's Reno and Harrah's Lake Tahoe award-winning resort properties before moving to Las Vegas to work at R&R Advertising, Nevada's premier advertising and public relations company for President Sig Rogich, veteran Nevada advertising executive and former US Ambassador to Iceland.

She served in technical support positions at the Yucca Mountain Project (YMP) for the Department of Energy (DOE) and at the Nevada Test Site at Mercury, Nevada.

Readers will find her recipes by going to the *Sunset* or *Cooking Light* websites at: <http://search.myrecipes.com/search.html?Ntt=Christine+Datian> or to: <http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>.