

You're kidding! Oktoberfest in Palestine?

By Maria C. Khoury

I have always known that what I do is very strange: promote culture and heritage in the ancient village of Taybeh in particular, and Palestine in general, with a German-style festival that has a Palestinian twist. It's challenging to try to give Palestine an identity in the beer world and promote beer culture when 99 percent of the population does not even drink alcoholic beverages. I am apparently not able to give up my obsession with promoting the beautiful little hometown of Taybeh Beer, even though my husband is no longer its mayor. David Khoury became the first democratically elected mayor of Taybeh in 2005, when most of the residents were putting pressure on the municipality to reduce the town's 50-percent unemployment rate.

The Khoury family made a heavy investment at a historic moment when in 1994 they started the first microbrewery in the Middle East and created local jobs. But sales immediately dropped by 50 percent with the onset of the Palestinian Uprising in September 2000, and continued to drop another 30 percent in 2001, almost forcing the company to go out of business. Under difficult conditions and in a tiny rural location whose roots reach back 5,000 years before the birth of Christ, it is hard to boost the economy: surrounded by hundreds of checkpoints, we are both physically and psychologically locked

up behind the Separation Wall. Thus the local municipality and Taybeh Brewing Company decided to cooperate under the umbrella of Taybeh Oktoberfest with the aim to promote local products while also providing a venue for Palestinian musicians to perform. Since 2005, the Taybeh Oktoberfest has been a highlight on the calendars of locals and tourists alike, enticing them to explore a unique spot of beautiful Palestine. The festival is now also encouraging rural tourism with the new Taybeh Golden Hotel that has the first Palestinian boutique winery on its ground level.

If we had to sum up the Taybeh Oktoberfest message to the world, it would be that the Palestinian people want to be free and wish to celebrate life like the rest of the world. Under harsh conditions, Oktoberfest promotes cultural heritage and reveals a different face of Palestine, one that is developing into a modern, moderate, and liberal country. Hope to see you at the biggest party in Palestine on September 16 and 17. Cheers!

Dr. Maria C. Khoury, author of Christina Goes to the Holy Land, has organized the Taybeh Oktoberfest since 2005 and is in charge of seeking the sponsorship of international bands to perform at Oktoberfest, helping to promote cultural exchange.

13th Annual

Taybeh Oktoberfest

AT TAYBEH BREWERY, TAYBEH, PALESTINE
(Ramallah District)

16 & 17 September 2017

1:00 - 10:00 PM



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