

- A nonprofit membership organization inspired by the spirit of traditional Kazakh communities
- Dedicated to building a bridge to Kazakhstan
- A Kazakh cultural resource



Inside this issue:

Getting ready for Nauryz	1
It takes a Village	1
Letter from the Administrative Executive Director	2
A romance that blossomed at Zhailau becomes a Nauryz wedding	3
The traditional Kazakh wedding	3
Winter, Jhut, the Great Jhut of the 1930s, and the significance of Nauryz	5
Nauryz Kozhe	6
Ask Daniyar	7
Kazakh connections corner	9

News from the Aul

Volume 3, Issue 1

Winter 2007

Getting Ready for Nauryz

As the Aul prepares for its third annual celebration of Nauryz, the Kazakh New Year, we have prepared this issue of our newsletter with many articles focused on this important Kazakh holiday. Inside, you will find informational articles by Daniyar Baidaralin about the historical background of Nauryz, special Nauryz food, and even an Aul Nauryz wedding announcement! Also included with this Winter 2007 mailing is an Aul article written last year about the holiday. If you are reading this newsletter at a later date, this article is also available on the Aul's website at <http://www.kazakh-aul-us.org/Nauryz.pdf>.

Nauryz is a special holiday. It is a time to spend together with family and friends, to connect with those who are important to you. Nauryz is a time to welcome spring and celebrate. We wish you and your family a wonderful Nauryz and the all the best for the new year.

Nauryz Kuttuh Bolsyn! (pronounced NowRYZ KutTUH BolSYN) — Have a happy Nauryz!

It Takes a Village: The Kazakh Aul of the U.S. Aims to Educate & Build Self-Esteem in Kazakh Children through Cultural Education

By Heather O'Toole

Inspired by the supportive community structure of traditional nomadic villages, or *Auls*, the *Kazakh Aul of the United States, Association for American & Kazakh Families* was founded by both Americans and native Kazakhs dedicated to educating and enriching the lives of children from Kazakhstan who are growing up in the U.S. Our Aul is a growing non-profit organization with members currently in 32 states.

The Kazakh Aul of the U.S. is not an adoption organization. We provide education to those who wish to immerse themselves in the rich and unique culture of Kazakhstan. Our members include Kazakh natives living in the U.S. or in Kazakhstan, as well as Kazakh adoptive families. For all these families, the Aul serves as a bridge for their children to experience a very important part of their being.



Aul members and Almaty natives Dilara and Dos Sarbassov enjoy the Aul's Nauryz 2006 celebration in metro Boston with their son Arman.

My husband Patrick O'Toole and I adopted our two children, Alina and Kairat, at the ages of one and two from Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2002. Before we traveled, I read many books on international toddler adoption, several of which contained the following message: It is vital that children have connections to their birth heritage in order to develop positive self-esteem as they mature. This message stayed with me, and as we departed for our adoption trip, I prepared not only to become a mother, but also to take the trip as an opportunity to learn as much as I could about my children's birth culture.

While in Kazakhstan, we were fortunate to have compassionate adoption coordinators who really took time to educate us about their country, hoping that one day we would share what we had learned with our children. We took seven hours of video and kept a journal of each day so that we would not forget the details of our experience. We also decided to have our children keep their birth names. To us, it was the one treasure which they could keep from their birth country while all other familiar sights, sounds, and smells would be left behind possibly forever. This country left an indelible impression on us and as we returned home to the U.S., my husband and I both knew in our hearts that our children would grow to know much about their place of birth.

Upon returning home, I made an effort to connect with other local Kazakhstan adoptive families. During this experience I decided to become involved with a new organization called the Kazakh Aul of the United States,

IT TAKES A VILLAGE, Continued on page 4

Letter from the Volunteer Administrative Executive Director



Greetings!

Life is full for us volunteers at the Aul; the Nauryz and Zhailau planning committee is hard at work. We anticipate well over 100 people to attend our Nauryz festival on March 24th in metro Boston, and a similar number of people are already registered for our Zhailau Kazakh heritage camp to be held in New Hampshire this July. We are delighted that families of Kazakh nationals as well as American families with children adopted from Kazakhstan will both be attending. We are truly a cross-cultural community!

The biggest news by far here at the Aul is that Daniyar and Assylgul just got married! Please see the announcement on page 3. Assylgul is here from Almaty to perform dombra at our Nauryz celebration and to work on the development of our Kazakh cultural programs and education.

Gulsaya Tuleubayeva, the Aul's Cultural, Dance, Drama, and Oral Traditions Coordinator, will be coming from New York to dance at both Nauryz and Zhailau. At Zhailau, she will also teach dance. Our Nauryz performances will be rounded out by the Baidaralin brothers' dance of the light and dark spirits. In addition, we will feature a crafts table, Kazakh games, and a potluck.

The special holiday of Nauryz will soon be upon us. To help our community understand and appreciate the deep significance of this holiday, Daniyar has written several articles on different aspects of Nauryz for this newsletter. In addition, in the spirit of the current changes in his life, he wrote an article on the traditional Kazakh wedding ceremony.

We are delighted to announce a new regular column of the newsletter called "Kazakh Family Connections." Written by Aul Board member and volunteer Children's Programming Coordinator Audrey Englander, this new column will provide fun family activities designed to help you and yours learn about Kazakh language and culture. Please see page 9 for Audrey's kick-off column featuring a game she devised called *Kazakh Color Run* that was played with much success at last summer's Zhailau.

Another active Aul volunteer and board member, Heather O'Toole, contributes a wonderful article in this issue on page one devoted to what the Aul is all about, our mission, and what participation has meant to her and her family. This article is a condensed version of a piece that will soon be published in *Adoption Today* magazine. Congratulations, Heather!

In other Aul news, Kathy Tackabury a member of the Aul's board and volunteer fundraising director, has taken two grant writing courses, and continues to investigate funding options to help support our nonprofit organization and locations for Aul festivals. In addition to this generous work on our behalf, Kathy is an artist, the designer of the Aul's Shanyrak pins and pendants that are available for sale. (more information about purchasing is available on our website at www.kazakh-aul-us.org.)

Daniyar has been working hard on two new Kazakh-English language books/coloring books that will soon be available for purchase. One is a family book, the other about parts of the body. Each book is in full color, plus illustrations are also provided in black and white for children to color.

Thank you to all the wonderful Aul volunteers for all your hard work, dedication, and time, and for making all this cool stuff happen. And, to all our wonderful friends who are members of this truly special community, this Aul, I wish you the most wonderful of new years.

Nauryz Kuttuh Bolsyn!

Rakhmet!
(Thank you!)

Susan Saxon



Zhailau 2007: Kazakh Heritage Camp for Families July 23—28, 2007 *Just a few spaces left!*

The Zhailau planning committee is hard at work, and we cannot wait for July! If you are interested in attending the Aul's camp this summer in New Hampshire, hurry, because we only have a few rooms left. If you are unable to attend for the entire time and can arrange your own lodging, or if our accommodations sell out, please know the Aul also offers day rates. More information, including costs, are available on the Aul's website at www.kazakh-aul-us.org.

If you have any questions, or need any more information, please write info@kazakh-aul-us.org or call (401) 486-4023.



A Romance that Blossomed at Zhailau Becomes a Nauryz Wedding



Assylgul and Daniyar on their wedding day, March 16, 2007.

Together with Daniyar, Assylgul, and their families, the Aul is delighted to announce that Dan and Assylgul were married in Cranston, Rhode Island on March 16th.

Daniyar Baidaralin, an artist and native of Almaty, is a board member and founder of the Aul, and serves as its Volunteer Acting Cultural and Artistic Executive Director. Assylgul Baidaralina grew up on an Aul in Kazakhstan, and is an architect in Almaty. She serves as the Aul's Kazakhstan Cultural Representative, and works many tireless hours volunteering in the ongoing development of our cultural programs.

Assylgul traveled to the U.S. last summer to work at Zhailau where she performed and taught *dombra*, and also taught Kazakh craft classes. Zhailau 2006 was a magical experience for all participants, and now we know, especially, for Assylgul and Daniyar. The couple became engaged last fall.

Many Zhailau 2006 participants chipped in on a group wedding gift for the couple, a 3-night honeymoon at a romantic inn on Cape Cod. Warmest congratulations to Assylgul and Daniyar!!

The Traditional Kazakh wedding

By Daniyar Baidaralin

The family is one of the foundations of any society, and it is central among the Kazakh people. When it comes time for a couple to marry, their wedding is not a simple personal matter, but a whole-family event. The Kazakh proverb says: "You don't marry just a person, you marry the whole kin."

Kazakhstan is mostly a modern country with a strong western influence, yet marriage retains some traditional customs. In traditional Kazakh culture, marriage is considered one of the most important milestones in one's life. Marriage is the official beginning of a new family, and is thereby regarded as a huge step towards personal and family responsibility.

The wedding is a big event and rich with symbolism. First, within the family, it signifies the uniting of two unrelated families and each partner becoming responsible for children, spouse, and extended kin. Second, within the broader culture, a wedding symbolizes the couple each taking on their adult roles as members of society, and; finally, within the spheres of history and human existence, marriage means following the laws of nature and taking part in a biological way in the circle of life.

In a modern world everything is a subject to change, and Kazakh wedding traditions are no different. Nonetheless, there currently are a variety of types of weddings available. In the cities of Kazakhstan, weddings are a mixed and simplified version of western and traditional Kazakh traditions. They include formal registration with the local government, a trip for the wedding party to a local tourist attraction (such as the *Medeu* in Almaty), and a big traditional banquet in a restaurant.

The banquet is probably the most important part of a city wedding. This is where the most action occurs, and where most guests will attend. The most important figure of a wedding banquet (besides the groom & bride and their families) is a host called the *Tamada* (TahmaDAH). He or she is the soul of the celebration and it is the Tamada's responsibility to make sure everything goes smoothly and according to custom.

Being the Tamada requires very specific skills, such as a keen sense of humor, knowledge of national traditions, the ability to run a party program and keep a party alive, all while improvising (a lot!), even singing, performing, and organizing games and pranks. In big cities, the Tamada is a profession unto itself, but for smaller weddings the Tamada could be a friend or a relative. The Tamada must know the names of each of the members of both extended families as well as the wedding couple's friends, all while strictly obeying the customary social hierarchy. For example, the Tamada will invite family members one by one to make a speech for each toast, beginning with the oldest and most respected relatives. A good Tamada fills the breaks between toasts with wedding games, music, dance programs, and constantly bursts in with jokes.

The joking at a Kazakh wedding is an art into itself. Each speaker tries to impress everyone with an original joke about the groom and bride and their families. The tricky part is to make a cool joke without offending anyone. It is not recommended to people who are not closely familiar with this tradition.

The wedding couple's families always try to have abundant food for their guests, because a bountiful table is an important sign of prosperity, and no guest should ever leave hungry. There are three courses of food at a Kazakh wedding which are so plentiful that they are the equivalent of nine courses in an American restaurant! It is also traditional to make extra food, so guests can take leftovers home to partake in the happiness of the just married. This tradition is called *Sarqit* (SahrKHYT).

It is important to note that for 75 years Kazakhs married in the manner approved by the Soviets. After the fall of the USSR, many authentic traditions returned, including the Islamic lifestyle. Islamic traditions are stronger in the south of Kazakhstan; however, recently they have begun to spread to the north of the country. Usually Islamic influences are limited at weddings, as most couples choose not to follow all the Islamic traditions, and instead invite a mullah to attend for couple of hours to bless the newlyweds and give a wedding donation.

TRADITIONAL KAZAKH WEDDING Continued on page 4

The Kazakh wedding (*continued*)

Many people, especially in rural areas, prefer to have a ceremony the traditional Kazakh way. The traditional ceremony is probably the most complicated wedding option, and some say that in a modern Kazakhstan there is no one left who knows the complete original ritual. In fact, a description of the Kazakh wedding ceremony could comprise a whole book, because every single detail of the ceremony symbolizes magical, religious, social, poetic, and many more meanings. Plus, the territory of Kazakhstan is so huge that different regions have significant differences in traditions. The basics will be highlighted here.

The process starts a few months before the wedding with a marriage brokerage called *Sirha Tahu* (Сырһа Таһу) which is an agreement between the two families. The parents of the groom visit the house of the bride's parents and ask their permission for the marriage. The groom's parents bring earrings or a ring for the bride and gifts for all the members of her family. The chances of a negative response from the bride and her family are usually low because the *Sirha Tahu* is pre-arranged well in advance, although no one speaks about it openly. When the father of a bride accepts the proposal, the mother of the groom will put earrings on the bride's ears. From this moment on the couple is officially engaged. That same day, the families set the date for the wedding and discuss the amount of the bride's ransom.

After the wedding date is set, both sides begin extensive preparations, for the celebration usually continues with increasing intensity and can last over a few days. On the appointed day, the groom's caravan with a ransom arrives at the bride's aul to take her home, and the bride's family organizes a big farewell celebration. The bride will not appear until the middle of the celebration when she spectacularly comes out wearing her best dress or wedding finery, while everyone else sings and dances. The bride's face is covered, and will remain that way throughout all the wedding festivities.

At the end of the celebration, the groom's party escorts the bride to her new house. Upon arrival, she spills a little oil into the fireplace, to symbolize her best intentions and to wish the best for her new family. Then, the celebration continues until late night.

The next morning, guests gather once again and wait for the appearance of the bride. When she appears, her face still covered, the next part of the ceremony begins, the *Korimdik* (pronounced Koh-rihmDHIK), the Bride Show. A poet/singer the *Aqin* (АқһУНН) plays *Dom-bra* and sings a song in which each verse is dedicated to a different member of the groom's family, beginning with the grandparents. As each family member is referred to in the song, the bride bows to that person. In turn, each participant places his or her gift on a tray. In this way, the *Korimdik* helps the bride become familiar with the members of her new family.

Next comes the *Bet-Ashar* (pronounced Beht-AHSHAHHR) - the Face Opening ceremony – and the culmination of the entire wedding celebration. The Akin or a relative(s) of the groom uncovers the bride's face so everyone can see her for the first time. Everyone sings the special *Bet-Ashar* song and the couple is officially married. The celebration continues with increasing intensity and can last for a few days.

References

Kazakhstan – traditions (rus.). <http://www.balaumiti.kz/index.php?page=kz&blog=traditions>

The Kazakh wedding (rus.). http://www.e-prazdnik.ru/wedding/wedding_kazah.php

Shaizada Mynzhasarova. Kazakhs. The portrait of thousands-years being (rus.). <http://investkz.com/journals/45/146.html>

It takes a Village (*continued*)

Association for American and Kazakh Families. That was just over two years ago... and it amazes me how much our family has evolved since that time. Through our participation in semi-annual events, we have in fact become a Kazakh-American family and I can see the pride in my children's eyes as they tell their classmates all about the Kazakh Aul.

The Aul's semi-annual events are centered on the life of the Kazakh nomads. Historically, these people lived with extended family in a round tent called a yurt which was made of sheep's wool, bamboo and wood. At the very top center of the yurt was a hole, called a *Shanyrak* which is symbolic of the sun, the sky and mother earth. Families of the Aul would work together to raise and dismantle yurts, cook, share legends and music and celebrate with traditional festivities.

The Kazakh Aul celebrates *Nauryz* (the Kazakh New Year) during the spring equinox, when day and night are of equal duration. It is a time when people forget their troubles and forgive others. It is also a time when people join together to welcome spring, celebrate nature and family and rejoice in their blessings. Both adoptive families and Kazakh natives will gather together this year in Arlington, MA for a Kazakh music performance, games, crafts, and traditional cuisine. All of this will take place upon colorful rugs which will lie beneath the Aul's own *Shanyrak* suspended from the ceiling above. As we gather, our children will show off their traditional Kazakh costumes as they play together and make new friends. No where else in the United States can you find an Aul like this one!

For those members who are across the country and cannot attend our events due to logistics, we hope that our newsletter keeps you connected and up-to-date. This cultural resource plays a large part in connecting us all, no matter how many miles are between us.

Whether through active participation in yearly traditional celebrations or staying connected through our quarterly newsletters, our members share a determination to surround themselves with the rich and unique culture of Kazakhstan. Like the yurt, created and built by passionate hands, the Kazakh Aul of the United States is held together by its caring and devoted members. This is our village.



Winter, Jhut, the Great Jhut of the 1930s, & the Significance of Nauryz

By Daniyar Baidaralin

There is no more dreadful word in the vocabulary of nomads than *Jhut* (*Djhut*, *Dzhut*, *Zhut*; pronounced JHOOT). The English synonyms of it are: nature's catastrophe, disaster, devastation, loss of cattle, famine, hunger, etc. Jhut was every nomad's worst nightmare. It was worse than the invasion by an enemy or war. In case of war, there was at least a chance to run away at worst. children and women became slaves, but they survived. In the case of Jhut, all living creatures died in the Great Steppe. During the thousands of years of nomadic history, whole tribes became extinct because of Jhuts. There was a proverb: "Jhut is seven disasters all together."

Settled agricultural nations throughout history had more or less stable lives (major cities always had 5-7 years worth of food supplies in underground storage). In contrast, nomads were completely dependant on nature. And, since nature's mood is never stable, the nomads' entire existence was always in question. In a typical winter, horses would break thin layers of ice or snow with their hooves to reach the previous-year's grass, and other livestock would also use this hole to feed themselves. However, in some years the ice was so thick, that even horses failed to brake through it. Jhuts were caused by a severe frost occurring following a sudden freezing after spring rains. Then the whole steppe would be covered with armor of ice, which prevented livestock from reaching plants to eat and kept vital new wild grasses from growing, resulting in whole herds starving to death.

Even a mild Jhut (which happened way too often) would bring a very bad year for the nomads. Losing even a part of their herds meant a hungry year and a horrible upcoming winter. Exhausted and hungry animals would be unable to reproduce that year, putting in jeopardy the very future of the nomads. Mild Jhuts that occurred a few years in a row would have the same effect as one large Jhut. Since nomads were completely dependant on their herds for their livelihood and very survival, the loss of livestock would automatically switch their lives to survival mode.

The economy of nomadic life was similar to a very sophisticated food chain; losing just one link of the chain could cause huge troubles, and the nomads could face death by starvation. Making the situation worse, after each winter their bodies were already exhausted, and people suffered from vitamin deficiency and poor diet. The livestock were also exhausted, and food caches were almost empty. The whole nomadic society would be on the edge of death of starvation. The big Jhuts emptied the Great Steppe for years, wiping out most forms of life, including hundreds of thousands of nomads and millions of their livestock.

This is one of the reasons of why the usually very peaceful nomads would attack and plunder their neighbors, seeking food in their desperation to survive, for their only two options left were to fight or die. Most of the nomadic hit-and-run raids took place in the early spring of poor crop years, and neighboring nations always expected nomadic raids at that time. From their neighbor's perspective, the nomads were one of nature's disasters, and in this way, they are remembered in the history of many cultures. Sometimes the nomads' neighbors were prepared to fight and defeated nomadic military forces, killing many. Then, left without provisions and men, nomadic families starved to death.

The last big Jhut occurred in Kazakhstan in the 1930s. The devastating conditions occurred twice, causing two big waves of Jhuts within a few years. It was so bad, that in Kazakh history it is called *the Great Hunger of the 1930s (the Great Jhut of 1930s)*. A result of natural causes combined with the economic politics of the Soviet party, the Great Jhut took the lives of millions of Kazakhs and forced many of the survivors to emigrate (up to 3.5 million dead or refugees, according to some sources). As a result, this was the second largest emigration wave in the 20th century, second only to the emigration that took place right after the Soviets came to power in 1917. The Great Jhut decreased the population of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan by up to 60%, and it took 40 years for the population to recover to pre-Great Jhut numbers.

My father Zhanat told me that his mother Shapikha was a survivor of the Great Jhut and witnessed its horrifying consequences. My grandmother said that the whole Kazakh Steppe, as far as her eyes could see, was covered with the bodies of dead and dying people, and the smell of thousands of corpses covered hundreds of miles. Thus, without any wars, the Kazakhs lost more that half their population within a few years.

The Great Jhut is the reason that the current population of Kazakhstan is so low, and we continue to suffer the consequences of depopulation; Kazakhstan is the 60th country in the world by population, yet it is the ninth largest in terms of land mass. Some modern Kazakh historians call the Great Jhut of 1930 "the genocide of Kazakh nation." Indeed, it is one of the deepest scars in the modern history of Kazakhstan.

As we can see, history shows that through the last few centuries, the Kazakhs often lost tremendous amounts of their population, coming close to extinction. This fact serves to emphasize the incredible ability of nomads to recover quickly, and still remain optimistic and full of life. It is no wonder then that Nauryz was the most expected celebration of all. If people were able to celebrate the Nauryz, it meant that another winter was left behind, the nomads survived and had the opportunity to live through another year. A long, dark, horrible life with little hope to survive and under the control of some unpredictable and cruel power— and then a happy, bright freedom with plenty. This is where the myth of fight between the Dark & Light Spirits originated.

The spring holiday Nauryz in its nomadic version is a celebration of humans' undefeated will to live and reproduce. All this is why the celebration of Nauryz is so important in Kazakhstan – not just to honor the memory of both our nomadic ancestors and the Kazakhs of the 1930s who struggled to the death and did not survive to enjoy spring in the Great Steppe, but to celebrate Life itself. The example of nomads who lived their lives from year to year never knowing if they would see the next spring is one of the best illustrations of human beings' strong spirit. We keep the tradition of Nauryz alive to worship Life and to enjoy it while we can, for it won't last forever, and we remember that life often comes at a very expensive price.



Nauryz Kozhe

By Daniyar Baidaralin and Assylgul Baidaralina

The celebration of Nauryz in Kazakhstan is so important that it requires a very special dish, prepared only at this time of the year – the *Nauryz Kozhe* (Kuh-zheh). Nauryz Kozhe is a traditional nomadic meal, made out of many ingredients, very rich in taste and quite nourishing.

There is a simple historical and practical reason for the invention of Nauryz Kozhe. By the end of winter, nomads typically suffered from vitamin deficiency and hunger; they needed power supplements in their poor diet. The livestock were also exhausted, and needed a break. The food caches were almost empty.

And then came a cure – *Spring Kozhe*, which was the predecessor to Nauryz Kozhe. Spring Kozhe was made out of every food product the nomads could find in their supplies - mostly preserved or dried products such as sun-dried meat, grains, Qurt (a dry & salty milk product snack), etc. Boiled altogether, these ingredients comprised a substantial, nourishing, and filling dish that was full of vitamins. It was the last card from the sleeve of the nomads, their last peaceful venture to help them survive.

It is no wonder that “spring” Kozhe evolved to become a symbol of Nauryz, for as a New Year always brings new strengths and hopes, so does Kozhe for nomads. Later the “spring” Kozhe coincided with the Nauryz celebration, and became the Nauryz Kozhe. There are a few versions of Kozhe depending on the region of Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Nauryz Kozhe is a rich and expensive dish for mostly symbolic reasons. The Kazakh nomads believed that on the occasion of the New Year, everything they did on this day would determine the rest of the year. That’s why Kazakhs would combine all their forces and use all their assets to celebrate Nauryz in as large a way as possible – because this would bring them a happy year. Therefore, the Nauryz Kozhe is the King of all Dishes – it is meant to provide people with plenty until the next Nauryz.

Seven is the magical number of Nauryz, and celebrants tried to have Nauryz Kozhe at seven houses. It is made from seven products: water, meat, salt, butter, flour, grain, and milk. These products symbolize what Kazakh nomads believed to be the seven components of well-being: happiness, luck, wisdom, health, wealth, love and favor of the skies.

In modern times it is difficult to produce the Nauryz Kozhe according to an authentic recipe, because doing so requires that one has very specific nomadic meat and milk products (such as Qurt). And, it is nearly impossible to make here in the U.S. because one of the major components is horse meat and horse milk (Kumys) which are not available in America. The recipe is also very complicated and requires a few types of grains, vegetables, spices, a lot of milk and meat products, and can take a couple of days to prepare. The preparation of Nauryz Kozhe is a whole science, especially knowing that some of the ingredients have to be prepared separately up to a few weeks in advance.

A recipe for Kozhe may be found on page 7 in this issue’s *Ask Daniyar* column

References:

TV & Radio company “31 channel” (Russian): <http://www.31.kz/31channel/index.php?uin=1131434365>

The Cuisine of Central Asia (Russian): <http://asia-menu.narod.ru/101.htm>

Kuking.net (Russian): http://kuking.net/8_656.htm





Ask Daniyar

Our Ask Daniyar column is a regular feature of this newsletter devoted to your questions about Kazakh culture. Daniyar Baidaralin is a 27-year-old Kazakh man, born & raised in Almaty. He currently lives in Rhode Island, & is excited to answer your culture questions. Please submit your questions to Dan at askdaniyar@kazakh-aul-us.org.

Dear Daniyar,

I'm confused about Kozhe. On other web-sites, I found it referred to as a drink, a porridge, a dish, or a soup. On your web-site, it is referred to as a meal. Is it a collection of different dishes or one dish with all the ingredients you mentioned? Also, I'm told that there is "regular" Kozhe and "Nauryz" Kozhe. The regular Kozhe seems to be just milk products and grains (no meat). Is that right?

Sherry Wilson
Dalton, Georgia

Dear Sherry,

This is correct! Nauryz Kozhe is a holiday dish, and only made once a year for Nauryz, while "regular" Kozhe is more casual and more of a drink.

Your confusion is understandable, since Nauryz Kozhe is a very complex dish. Plus, not many people in modern Kazakhstan know how to make it. The information on the Russian and Kazakh internet is also confusing. However, Nauryz Kozhe is all of the above that you mentioned. It is made not just from raw products, but also from other Kazakh meals, drinks, snacks etc. It takes a few weeks to go through the whole process. (For more information about Nauryz Kozhe, please read the article on page.....)

The original Nauryz Kozhe is probably impossible to produce here in the US, unless you bring a whole Aul of Kazakhs with all their facilities and livestock. This is because the major components of Nauryz Kozhe are horse meat and horse milk (Kumys) and related products.

Happily, the Nauryz Kozhe has a little brother – an everyday version – simply called Kozhe. Kozhe can be made in the US since it is much simpler than the Nauryz version and does not necessarily contain meat products. This Kozhe is a drink. Please keep in mind that Kozhe recipes vary from region to region in Kazakhstan.

Kozhe recipe by Vera Kurmasheva & Assylgul Baidaralina:

Ingredients:

Wheat grain (1 cup)
and/or Oat grain (1 cup)
Rice (1 cup)

Ayran (1/2 liter). Ayran is a traditional milk product drink (see below for our recommendations).

Salt to taste

Qurt (optional). Qurt is a traditional nomadic dry and salty milk product snack (see below for recipes).

A few pieces of beef Jerky (optional)

1. Boil a pot of water. Add wheat and/or oat grain. If you use more than one type of grain, make sure you first add the harder one.
2. The mixture will be boiled for a total of 1 ½ -2 hours, until it becomes thick and heavy. Approximately 30-40 minutes into the boiling process, add the rice. If you are using beef jerky, add it with the rice. The goal is to cook the rice with the grains, and to time the process so that both the rice and grains are done at the same time.
3. Remove the pot from heat. Add salt to taste or add a few pieces of Qurt.
4. Allow the pot to cool for a couple of hours. Once cool, add Ayran and stir well. Refrigerate for a few hours to let the Ayran fully saturate the grain/rice mixture.
5. Now, your refreshing and thirst-quenching Kozhe is ready! Make sure you stir it before ladling it into a glass – there has to be some amount of grains from the bottom of the pot in each serving.

When people make Kozhe in Kazakhstan, they sometimes add sun-dried horse meat called *Surr Et* (Surr-YET) during the boiling process. In America, you may substitute with beef jerky.

Ayran

For the uninitiated, Ayran is a traditional nomadic drink, as old as a thousand years, and remains popular in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Ayran is a cultured milk product and when made correctly, it is similar in consistency and taste to plain yogurt. The nomads used Ayran to cure vitamin deficiency, tuberculosis, bowel diseases, etc. Russian doctors learned of Ayran at the beginning of the last century, and some specially ordered it to cure Hepatitis A.

Soviet medicine recognized the curative effect of Ayran and always prescribed it to people going through health rehab courses. It became so popular that it was mass-produced, and included in the regular healthy breakfast of every Soviet person. Ironically, Ayran also became a favorite of Russian alcoholics, since it helped them to minimize the damage caused by enormous amounts of low quality hard liquors.

In Russia, Ayran is known by the name of Kefir. There is a Russian company in the US that makes perfect Kefir. Usually you can buy it in any local Russian Market. Also, it is available at Whole Foods (only plain Kefir is Ayran, not the flavored ones). It's a bit expensive, but it is really tasty and wholesome.

Or, you can make Ayran yourself from whole milk by adding a spoon of Kefir to a gallon and letting it get sour for few days in your refrigerator. It is a very delicate method though, because it can spoil easily (it will taste bitter). Ideally, if you keep the right temperature and make every next generation timely, you can run the Ayran culture for years (that's how they make it in kefir companies). Ayran is a perfect product for Kozhe.

Qurt

Qurt can be made to an almost 100% match (I've made it here in RI), or you can make a modified "American substitute."

Original Qurt recipe:

1. Put a gallon of whole milk (no low-fat milk!!!) in a big pot and mix it with a cup of Kefir (Ayran) and a couple spoons of sour cream (all products have to be warm/room temperature).
2. Cook on low heat for 3-5 minutes (Note: make sure the mixture doesn't cook. You only need a little warmth to initiate fragmentation).
3. Remove from heat and let the pot stand at room temperature for a few days (until it thickens so the spoon is standing). Basically, you wait until the mixture gets sour and tastes like Ayran or plain yogurt. If it tastes bitter – then the fragmentation did not work.

ASK DANIYAR continued on next page

Ask Daniyar (continued)

4. Next spill the thick mixture onto a piece of fabric (or a fabric bag), wrap it, and hang it in the open air in the shade for another few days (*Note: it will drip and smell, so you better do it outdoors. Also, make sure no wild animal can reach it*). Wait until it hardens enough to reach an approximate texture of children's dough. You will see that from one gallon of milk you'll barely get one cup of the dough substance. In Kazakh it is called Qatiq (Kha-TIKH) - it is a separate milk snack itself.
5. Knead the Qatiq with salt to taste, and mix carefully (*Note: Kazakhs usually make Qurt very salty, because then it helps to keep the body hydrated when an Aul is moving. Originally, Qurt was designed as a battle snack/meal (similar to a field meal in modern armies)*).
6. Break off small bits of dough and roll them into round pieces with your palms. (*Note: the smaller the size, the faster it will dry, although larger sizes last longer*).
7. Place your balls on a piece of paper or fabric and let them sit for a few weeks, until they reach your favorite condition.

Note: Qurt is good in any condition - semi-dry for children and elders, very dry for warriors. The longer you keep it, the harder it gets. Sometimes it seems to reach a condition of a stone (my favorite). Then you can't bite or chew on it anymore - only suck it. This is a perfect condition for long hiking or horse riding - will keep your mouth busy for hours and fill you with energy.

There are two ways to make an "Americanized" Qurt substitution:

Americanized substitution # 1. (pretty much matches the original)

1. Buy Kefir (or original, plain whole milk Yogurt).
2. Repeat steps from the original recipe starting from # 4, above.

Americanized substitution # 2 (for dummies but not a match for the original)

1. Buy Cottage Cheese (plain, whole milk, small-curd, no taste additives).
2. Repeat steps from the original recipe starting from # 5.



Dear Daniyar,

Do you know how similar this Nauryz celebration might be to a Nauryz celebration in Azerbaijan? I realize this is an odd question, so please don't feel you have to do any research if you don't know. However, I have a friend who adopted from Azerbaijan. She hasn't found much in the way of cultural events or other families in our area with Azeri ties. Because these two countries celebrate the same New Year, I thought she may enjoy attending the Aul's Nauryz celebration with her daughter.

Karen
Massachusetts

Hello Karen,

This is not an odd question at all! It is very logical and has all rights to be asked!

Yes, Nauryz is an official celebration for many nations in Asia and East. It is believed that Nauryz has Persian (Iranian) origins and translates as "the New Day". The roots of the holiday are very ancient, and it is believed that the roots of Nauryz began at least 2000 years ago, most likely in Persia (ancient Iran). Other sources claim that Nauryz has an even longer history (3,500-7,000 years).

Nowadays, Nauryz is celebrated mostly in Muslim countries, but it is not a religious holiday; it is a traditional celebration of the spring equinox celebrated. Similar celebrations (bounded to the spring equinox) may be found in many other cultures, such as Slavic, pre-Christian European, and Japanese.

Nauryz arises from the ancient cult of the Sun, its Earthly agent – Fire - and a worship of Nature. The date of Nauryz is based on the ancient eastern agricultural calendar, where the spring equinox was considered as the beginning of a new year.

In Azerbaijan, Nauryz is called Novruz Bayram (Nov-ROOZ Buy-RAHM). Some of the specifics of Azerbaijan's version of Nauryz are the following:

- It is celebrated on March 21st (as opposed to March 22nd in Kazakhstan)
- Since Azerbaijan is an Islamic country next to Iran and Turkey, Muslim ideologists always tried to tie this ancient potagonistic celebration to Islamic traditions. Iranian Shiites, for example, tied Novruz with the accession of Imam Ali.
- Azeris maintain very strong traditions of Zoroastrianism and fire-worship (pyrolatry). Zoroastrianism is a "Persian religion founded in the sixth century B.C.. by the prophet Zoroaster....and characterized by worship of a supreme god Ahura Mazda who requires good deeds for help in his cosmic struggle against the evil spirit Ahri-man" (Merriam-Webster dictionary).. Water, fire and air were the Three Elements of the Zoroastrian religion. Zoroastrianism was predominate in pre-Islamic times throughout a huge region of Central Asia and the Middle East. In modern times, Zoroastism still exists as a religion in India and Iran., and continues to have a strong influence on contemporary celebrations of Novruz in Azerbaijan. For example, fires and illumination are important fixtures of the Azeri version of Nauryz, as well as water-fire rituals
- Azeris start celebrating Novruz Bayram a few days in advance. There are a few steps: rituals, mostly occurring on different days during the week leading up to Novruz. In ancient times, it was a custom to cease all labor for six to twelve days prior to Novruz.
- The Azeris became settled much earlier than the nomads of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Nonetheless, their Novruz retains some important agricultural aspects. For example, it is part of their tradition to plant new trees within 30 days after the Novruz. Also it is a good sign to start agricultural works in the second day after the Novruz.

So, answering your question, while Nauryz in Kazakhstan and in Azerbaijan is the same celebration, there is a significantly different sensibility across the countries that arises directly from differences between lifestyles and different areas of habitat. Azeris, as a part of an agricultural civilization, treasure nature as their closest relative (a child, a mother-father, sister-brother) who they know very closely and with whom they actively engage (digging, planting, irrigating, changing landscapes, reaping the harvest). Being agriculturists, Azeris remain on the same fields for generations, laying down their roots into the soil that feeds them. In this way, they are themselves a nondetachable part of their ecosystem, settled so deep and strong that moving from their native ground would wound them.

ASK DANIYAR continued on next page

NEW! Kazakh Connections Corner

By Audrey Englander

The family connection corner is a new feature for the Aul's newsletter. It is my hope that with easy activities and crafts, as a family you can incorporate a little Kazakh language and culture into your life.

We begin with an activity that I developed for Zhailau last summer and was a big hit, a language game called *Kazakh Color Run* that teaches colors in Kazakh. The object of the game is for everyone to have fun - just as in an Aul everyone works together to play. Presented are two versions of the activity, one for school-aged (reading aged) children, and the second for preschool- aged children. End each version of the game with a treat in the appropriate colors, such as fruit, Jelly beans, M&M's, or stickers. The games are presented for indoor play using construction paper and can be played with both small and large numbers of people. They may also be modified for outdoor play by using plastic colored tablecloths on the ground/floor and securing the corners down with tape or rocks. Enjoy!

KAZAKH COLOR RUN

Preschool

What you need:

- Two sheets of construction paper in each of the following colors: white, black, red, yellow, green, and blue. You will have two sets of paper with each set containing one sheet of each color.
- Markers

Before play begins, one adult uses the markers to write the Kazakh word for each color in large letters on one set of the colored paper. Each sheet should have one word that corresponds to the color of that paper.

How to play

1. Take the set of sheets that does not have words written on it, and scatter the sheets on the floor around the room.
2. Place the set with words in a pile face down on the floor in the center of the room.
3. To begin play, one person is designated as the Announcer. The Announcer stands next to the pile in the center, picks one sheet, holds it up, and says aloud the Kazakh word. Next s/he says, "Go stand on *word*," where *word* is the Kazakh word.
4. The Announcer then counts aloud to three. Players have until "three" to find the correct color match in the room and to stand on the correct colored paper. Players must either be on the color or touching someone who is on the color. You form a chain of people if you are playing with friends.
5. On "three," the Announcers says "Three!" and everyone has to freeze.
6. The Announcer says the Kazakh color word and its English equivalent. Everyone together says the Kazakh word.
7. Players who did not find the correct match, get to take turns being the Announcer.
8. Continue paying until everyone has had a turn calling out all the colors.

School-age

What you need:

- One sheet of construction paper in each of the following colors: white, black, red, yellow, green, and blue.
- Six white sheets of construction paper.
- Markers

Before play begins, one adult uses the markers to write the Kazakh name for each color in large letters on the white paper, one word on each piece of paper.

How to play

1. Take the set of colored paper and scatter the sheets on the floor around the room.
2. Place the white sheets of paper face down in a pile in the center of room. Adult picks up one paper, calls it out and counts to three.
3. Follow Steps 3 through 5 listed above in the preschool section.
4. Players who did not find the correct match, are out.

Repeat steps 1 through 4 until players are ready to stop.

COLORS IN ENGLISH AND KAZAKH

<u>English</u>	<u>Kazakh pronunciation</u>
White	Akh
Black	Khar-HA
Red	Khu-ZYL
Yellow	Sah-RHY
Green	Zha-SYL
Blue	Kökh

Ask Daniyar (continued)

In contrast, Kazakhs being part of a nomadic civilization, worshiped Nature as an untouchable eternal treasure, trying to minimize their engagement with Earth and take only what was given (wild grasses, wild animals for hunting, water in rivers, fish in lakes). They did not try to force nature by any means. Nomads considered their lives as endless journeys; they did not try to develop strong ties to any particular territory, always remaining temporary guests wherever they stayed. From the nomads' perspective, any humans' attempts to impact nature could harm her.

Both nomads and agriculturists celebrate Nauryz out of same love and admiration for Mother Nature, with a deep understanding of nature's laws and absolute respect for them. Novryz (aka. Nauryz, Nowriz, Nowruz, Navruz, Nooryz) is widely celebrated in Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan. It is locally celebrated in Turkey (Kurds), Southern Russia (Tatars, Bashkirs), In a few countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Nauryz is an official holiday.



247 Cypress Street
Providence, RI 02906

Phone: 401-486-4023
E-mail: info@kazakh-aul-us.org
www.kazakh-aul-us.org



Our Mission

The Kazakh Aul of the United States, Association for American & Kazakh Families, aims to establish a cultural center dedicated to educating and enriching the lives of children from Kazakhstan who were adopted by loving American families and who are now growing up in the U.S. Together with their families, American will participate in Kazakh heritage camps and cultural education, to develop a deeper sense of knowledge and understanding of their birth culture, how they fit into both the Kazakh and American worlds, and to develop skills that in the future may be used to contribute to both their mother-countries, Kazakhstan and the U.S. The Kazakh Aul of the United States will serve as a cultural bridge to bring together the children of the two countries, helping them be citizens of the world and thereby promoting cross-cultural understanding that will sustain through the generations.



In this issue: NAURYZ —Information plus much more inside



Kazakh Aul of the U.S., Association for American & Kazakh Families

Board of Directors: Daniyar Baidaralin, Audrey Englander, Heather O'Toole, Susan Saxon, and Kathy Tackabury

Volunteer Administrative Executive Director: Susan Saxon

Volunteer Cultural & Artistic Executive Director: Daniyar Baidaralin

Volunteer Director of the Kazakhstan Division, Almaty: Leila Bassenova