

[for immediate release]



**Newcomer Kitchen**  
Cooking Up Opportunity

أول الشجرة بذرة  
*From a seed comes a tree*

A Community Dinner  
in Celebration of Eid  
and Newcomer Kitchen

**Thursday, June 29, 2017**  
*A Joyful Night of Traditional Syrian Food, Music & Activities*

**Where** The 519 • 519 Church St., Toronto, just North of Wellesley St.  
**When** Thursday June 29 • Doors 6pm, Dinner 7pm, Music 8:30pm  
**Tickets** \$35 • Tables of 6 & Kid's tix available, Cash Bar, Prizes

More information + tickets available at [newcomerkitchen.ca](http://newcomerkitchen.ca)

## Eid meets Pride: Newcomer Kitchen cooks dinner at The 519

Ramadan and Pride Month both end next week, and as different as they might be, they both have important things to teach us all about tolerance and inclusion. These are values at the heart of *From a Seed Comes a Tree: A Community Dinner in Celebration of Eid*, being hosted by [Newcomer Kitchen](http://NewcomerKitchen.ca) at [The 519](http://The519.ca), an LGBT-focused community center in downtown Toronto. The event gets its name from an old Arabic proverb; it speaks both to the far-reaching outcomes that tiny gestures can have, as well as the spirit of putting down new roots and building new lives.

Set for **Thursday, June 29** in the Grand Ballroom of the Salah Bachir wing of The 519, *From a Seed Comes a Tree* is Newcomer Kitchen's first large-scale community dinner, and will feature a lavish buffet of over a dozen traditional Syrian dishes, along with Syrian music by SyCa.

Tickets are **\$35** and are available [online](http://newcomerkitchen.ca); there are discounts for kids, and tickets that can be bought as gifts for members of the Syrian community. Four VIP tables await savvy corporate sponsors or philanthropic donors who want a front seat on all the action.

*“With the help of hundreds of people, Newcomer Kitchen as accomplished some remarkable things in the last 15 months. But there hasn’t really been a chance for these people to meet each other, or the amazing families they have empowered. Eid seemed like a perfect opportunity to share something really special with our community, and the incredible generosity of The 519 made it possible.”*

— Len Senater, co-founder of Newcomer Kitchen

After weeks of fasting and prayer, the 60+ Syrian families of Newcomer Kitchen are looking forward to the celebration of Eid al-Fitr that marks end of Ramadan. Meanwhile, after a busy month of Pride parties, galas, concerts and parades, the staff of The 519 could probably use a few well-earned days off. But instead they’ve offered to open their doors to a group of Syrian newcomers to host a dinner for more than 200 guests. It’s a gesture of hospitality that speaks volumes about the empathy and solidarity that comes from having been on the margins. And being only a few days before Canada Day, it’s a poignant reminder of a set of values that sets Canada apart from so many other places in the world.

### **About Newcomer Kitchen**

At the beginning of 2016, many newly-arrived Syrian refugee families found themselves housed in cheap hotels with no kitchens to cook food for themselves — sometimes for weeks or even months at a time. **Len Senater**, owner of [The Depanneur](#), a tiny alternative food venue in Toronto’s West end, along with **Cara Benjamin-Pace** and a few scrappy volunteers, decided to try and invite some of these Syrian women to use their kitchen to cook familiar food and share a friendly meal. With the help of some young Syrian newlyweds, **Esmaeel Aboufakher** and **Rahaf Al Akbani** who were also living in one of the hotels, kitchen and cooks came together, and a remarkable project was born.

Over the course of the last 16 months, that small gesture of hospitality and courage has grown into a remarkable project called **Newcomer Kitchen** that now includes more than 60 families. Every Thursday, a handful of the women come to The Depanneur’s tiny kitchen to prepare 50 meals of traditional Syrian home cooking. The meals are put up for sale online, for pickup or delivery (sponsored by Foodora), and the proceeds are divvied up among the cooks. These weekly dinners, along with a few choice catering gigs, have added up to over 4000 meals and over \$50,000 earned by a talented group of newcomer women.

### ***[From a Seed Comes a Tree](#)***

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