

taught me, you can incorporate humour with food. I thought "This is fantastic. My character fits right in to this."

Souvla is the word for sword. Before they ate meat they used to sacrifice it to a god. They would then cook it and then using their swords they would pass big chunks of meat. Souvlaki means eating a little sword. When I embarked on my book, aside from the fact that I wanted ancient Greek history incorporated in the book, family was very important. So I wanted to capture my family stories. Food and family are so interrelated, you cannot separate the two. There is that lovely saying, "We don't eat to live, we live to eat." Everything is based around food.

PETER THOMPSON: It's really lucky it's dinnertime because these scenes are making my mouth water.

MARIA BENARDIS: Mine's watering too, actually. I wish I had a souvlaki right here, right now.

PETER THOMPSON: You can make one up for us.

MARIA BENARDIS: Yeah, I could.

PETER THOMPSON: Greece is modernising very fast.

MARIA BENARDIS: It certainly is.

PETER THOMPSON: With that comes the risk of losing authenticity, I

suppose.

MARIA BENARDIS: Absolutely. This is one of the things that I'm realising when I travel back to Greece. I'm realising that some of the old trades and traditions will get lost if there's not people like me around to start documenting them and preserving them. An example of that is when you go to Kalamata. We're known for the silk scarf. Because, of course, there's a dance called the Kalamatiano and the Greek girls wear a silk scarf that is traditionally made by the nuns and it's done with those old, beautiful weaving machines. Now there's only three ladies left, and they're quite elderly, that are doing that. When I visited them they pleaded with me and they said, "Are you interested in doing this? We'd love to teach you to do it because no-one else wants to do it." I was in tears. I just couldn't believe it.

PETER THOMPSON: At the beginning of our conversation you talked about trust and not having trust from your early days because you had no-one to trust in for a long time. What I've learnt from reading and talking to you really has been that in Greece, food is so much part of family and culture. What about having a family of your own to share it?

MARIA BENARDIS: Interesting, be-

cause I know I'm going to have thousands of children and I've always been told that I wasn't going to, my spiritual calling, said to me that I wasn't going to have my own children but I was going to have thousands of orphans. And I always knew that I would sacrifice my life to helping others and I was OK with that, I was comfortable.

PETER THOMPSON: That's the Maria.

MARIA BENARDIS: That's the Maria.

I volunteer my services to Mission Australia. I help out homeless and disadvantaged people, so I help them with cooking. I actually feel on top of the world when I'm working with those people. It also reminds me of where I was. I get a sense that they feel that same rejection that I felt as a child. A Greek family is all about incorporating other people. Friends are my family. It's all about sharing. We eat and drink so much that we've got to constantly be toasting to our health.

PETER THOMPSON: You say you can't wait till the next stage.

MARIA BENARDIS: No, I can't. It's because that's the stage when I'll be really contributing back to human, mankind, and doing my charity work and making a real difference in young people's lives or

homeless people's lives.

PETER THOMPSON: How can you do that in a practical sense?

MARIA BENARDIS: Well, the whole aim of what I'm doing and any money that I make will go straight back into orphanages. So one of my goals is in two years' time to go and live in Greece part-time because I've actually visited some orphanages and they're in need of basic things. They're in need of books for kids to read. Most important of all I'd like to teach them how to cook, you know, and get them to find the same connection and love that I found through food. And to say to them that, "You know what? You may not find love and connection through humans, and maybe they've let you down, but you can find it through food." I'm just really excited to get to that stage soon.

PETER THOMPSON: Of course, the Mediterranean diet is perfect for a long life. We should go and eat.

MARIA BENARDIS: We should indeed.

PETER THOMPSON: Maria, thanks for coming on Talking Heads.

MARIA BENARDIS: Thank you for having me, appreciate it.

Article from



ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE AUSTRALIAN CHAPTER

MEMBER, UNREPRESENTED NATIONS AND PEOPLES ORGANIZATION (UNPO)

The Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) - Australia Chapter participated in the annual worldwide commemoration of the genocide committed by the Ottoman Turks from 1915 to 1918 during WWI against Turkey's Christian Assyrian, Armenian and Pontic Greek constituents of Anatolia, strengthening the Assyrian links with Armenians and Hellenics.

The AUA representatives attended the observance conferences organized by the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee that took place on April 22 and 24. The first gathering was held at the Parliament House of New South Wells, and the second one at Macquarie University. Both events held in Sydney were attended by more than eight hundred people. The keynote speaker at these commemorations was Mr. Seto Boyadjian Esq, a political analyst and the former executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The Assyrian delegation included Mr. Hermiz Shahan, Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance and the Regional Secretary

Mr. Nenos Nissan, Mr. Ben Jabro, and Mr. Ninos Aaron.

In addition to participating in these conferences, Assyrian activists

joined the Armenian nationalists who protested outside the Turkish Consulate in Sydney



of Australia and New Zealand, Mr. David David, Executive Secretary of the AUA - Australia Chapter and the President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation, Miss Annabel Saint Vincent, Mr. Benjamin Benjamin, Mr. Paul Azzo,

on Sunday, April 18, 2010, demanding that modern Turkey recognize and condemn the horrible acts of its Ottoman Turk government.

On Friday, April 16, the Assyrian Universal Alliance representatives attended an important annual reception

organized by the Australian Hellenic Council of NSW at Campsie in Sydney, celebrating the longstanding ties that have bonded Australians and Hellenics. The keynote speaker was Dr. Panayiotis Diamadis, a specialist in holocaust and genocide studies, who gave an informative seminar about the genocide in Anatolia, highlighting the passionate stance of the Australian people toward the victims of this genocide in providing assistance to the survivors. He spoke about the role of Australian WWI soldiers who advocated for Assyrian, Armenian and Pontic Greek refugees, deeds that these "diggers" recorded in their memoirs and reported in their correspondence with their headquarters in Australia. The Assyrian Universal Alliance-Australia Chapter believes that through our united efforts, we can convince the international community to persuade the people and government of Turkey to recognize these heinous acts that were perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks against Turkey's Armenian, Assyrian and Pontic Greek subjects.

Assyrian Universal Alliance - Australian Chapter
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Community Noticeboard/ What's On

Cancer Causes Questions

An informative session
on practical support
resources available through
Cancer Council NSW.

The Cancer Causes Questions program is a free community education program for cancer patients, their friends, family and carers. This program covers resources available to cancer patients, their carers and loved ones for emotional support, financial planning, legal support and employment issues. If you are a person who has been recently diagnosed with cancer and are not sure where to find emotional and/or practical support, then this session is for you. Morning tea and lunch will be provided. Registration is essential.

Date: Saturday 8 May 2010
Time: 10.00am - 1:30pm
Venue: The Cancer Council NSW
153 Dowling Street
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011
Register:
By Tuesday 4 May 2010,
Cancer Council NSW
Email: nadinec@nswcc.org.au
or Ph: 9334 1868