



PERSIAN FESTIVAL of AUTUMN

SEPTEMBER 9-10, 2006
ORANGE COUNTY FAIR & EXPO CENTER



AT A GLANCE

What: Persian Festival of Autumn (Mehregan)

When: Saturday, September 9 and Sunday, September 10, 2006
(11 am to 10 pm)

Where: Orange County Fair & Expo Center,
88 Fair Drive Costa Mesa, CA 92626 (Fairview & Arlington)

Attendance: Over 20,000 (estimate)

Admission: \$20 (presale) \$25 (at the door)
Kids under 10 free, Free Parking

Info: (949) 851-3993, mehregan@nipoc.org, www.nipoc.org

MEHREGAN FESTIVAL - A CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONS

Persian Festival of Autumn, a community festival is put together by hundreds of volunteers who donate their time and talents to its success. The 11th annual event celebrates Persian culture with music, dance, artwork, crafts, traditional Persian cuisine, traditional tea house, and costumes. The festival represents Iranian-Americans' interest in our heritage and commitment to share that heritage with the community. Iranian-Americans pride themselves on maintaining a commitment to education, business, and social causes in the tightly woven community of over **500,000 in Southern California**. Iranians have strong cultural connections and a strong value system. Mehregan (pronounced 'meh-re-gahn') is a celebration of nature from ancient Persian Goddess Mehr, the spirit of love, knowledge, and commitment.



The event is sponsored and organized by NIPOC, Network of Iranian-American Professionals of Orange County (www.nipoc.org), Khayam Persian School Foundation, (www.persianschool.org), and other Iranian cultural and student groups in Southern California. This year's Mehregan is dedicated to **Cyrus the Great and is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, September 9 & 10, at the Orange County Fair & Exposition Center in Costa Mesa, CA**. This is perhaps the largest Iranian gathering in the United States, with over 20,000 visitors expected at the two-day family event.

CELEBRATING CYRUS THE GREAT KING OF PERSIA



This year's festival is dedicated to the famous Persian King, Cyrus the Great. Cyrus the Great was the founder of the Persian Empire under the Achaemenid dynasty and the creator of the Cyrus Cylinder, considered being the first declaration of human rights. Upon taking Babylon, Cyrus issued a declaration inscribed on a clay barrel, known today as the Cyrus Cylinder. It recounts his victories and merciful acts, and documents his royal lineage. It was discovered in 1879 in Babylon, and today is kept in the British Museum.

The cylinder of Cyrus is widely referred to in modern times as the "first charter of human Rights". The United Nations translated and published it into all of its official languages. The cylinder decrees the normal themes of Persian rule: religious tolerance, abolishment of slavery, freedom of choice of profession, and expansion of the empire.

The festival grounds are decorated with artifacts reminding the visitors of history and the contribution this king has made to human kind. As you walk into the Mehregan Festival, you will see the images of the old Persian Empire, Persepolis, and then through the Gates of Civilization into 12 provinces of Persian Empire. You will have a picture opportunity at the first declaration of human rights by Cyrus the Great.



FOOD, FUN, ENTERTAINMENT – PERSIAN STYLE!

At Mehregan, there are plenty of activities for young and old including traditional music, dance, arts and crafts, ancient sports, pop music, and, of course, the exotic Persian food.

Mehregan Festival bridges lives. Those born in Iran and their American-born children share the event with each other and with visitors. At one end of the Orange County Fairgrounds, older Iranians relax on a spread of lush rugs listening to traditional music from their homeland. Across the expanse, teenagers amble toward the heavy beat of Persian pop pounding from a deejay's speakers. Between the generations is a sea of tents teeming with the Iranian culture that unites them all. Mehregan Festival allows us to re-connect with tastes, sounds, and sights of the land we left behind.



Mehregan is a harvest festival often compared to Thanksgiving in America.

PROVINCES: ONE NATION MANY CULTURES

Iranian-Americans born in each of the provinces welcome visitors into an arc of tents featuring the textiles, tastes, and spices of each region. The smell of cumin fills the air in the Kerman province tent, while women in colorful, elaborate dresses play music from the northwestern province of Kurdistan in another. Costumes and posters showing historical places of each province are at display. In total, there are 12 provinces (ostans) represented. They are: Kurdistan, Gilan, Esfahan, Kerman, Yazd, Azarbaijan, Khoozestan, Golestan, Hormozgan, Khorasan, Tehran, and Fars. There is also a tent dedicated to Assyria. Stop by and say hello to each one of these dedicated people.



PERSIAN ENTERTAINMENT: MODERN AND TRADITIONAL

Entertainment is a key feature of Mehregan. This year, three stages are setup for various modern and traditional Persian Music featuring the hottest stars. On the Main stage Popular Persian singers will entertain the crowd while on the Center Stage Folkloric dancers and performers (Raghs-e Mahali) will perform.



One area which is always the crowd's favorite is the Tea House (*Chai Khane*).



This area which is decorated by several tables covered with Persian rugs reminds people of the old tea houses in Iran. Activities include live performances, dancing, poetry reciting, and, of course, Persian music performed by well-known traditional artists. Partial lists of entertainers performing this year are: Black Cats, Sandy, Strunz & Farah, Noosh Afarain, Pyruz, Behzad, Shahla Sarshar, Parvaneh, Forouzandeh, Farbod, and many others. There are also three major dance groups performing traditional and modern Persian dance routines. They are: Golsanam Dance

Group, Pro Dancers, and Beshkan Dance Academy.

CHILDREN AT MEHREGAN



Kids under the age of 10 are admitted free to Mehregan Festival. Children coordinators, Mrs. Hoori Ghahremani and Ms. Nora Valenzuela, have planned many great activities including: Arts, Drawing, Coloring, Pottery, Air Brush Tattoos, Face Painting, Story Telling, and Calligraphy (Names in Farsi & English), Crafts (making kites, pinwheels, etc.), Balloon Arts, and Kid's Music & Dance.

Art & Essay Contest: Mehregan Festival, in partnership with Tebot Bach (a literary non-profit organization) is conducting a drawing and an essay contest in Orange County. "PEACE" is the theme of the Drawing contest. "PEACE", "CYRUS THE GREAT", and "PERSIAN FESTIVITIES" are the themes for grades 6-12 Essay Contest. All entries will be displayed in the Orange County Fair & Expo Center. Entry forms available at www.nipoc.org



YOUTH PROGRAMS

Young people are our future and a special section with a large tent is dedicated to them. The tent is called "Cyrus Lounge" this year, to go along with the overall theme of Mehregan of Cyrus the Great. The outside will have a grand entrance with columns and arches to resemble ancient Persia. The inside will be decorated in an upscale fashion using white columns, white couches, and black flooring. The whole tent will be covered with black astro-turf which will allow our visitors to really enjoy a lounge atmosphere. There will be a lot of decor inside to give this lounge a true ancient Persian feeling. The purpose is to create a fantasy of how the elite youth would have lived in the days of Cyrus the Great. Local colleges will be there to represent their Persian clubs and schools. Expect a Hollywood style lounge with a twist of Ancient Persia!



POETRY AT MEHREGAN

Poetry has always been a part of Persian Culture and Literature. In western countries, many are familiar with the works of great poets such as Omar Khayyam and his Rubaiyat, as well as the great Rumi, among many others. At this year's festival, our "Poetry That is Life" exhibit features "The Translation Project", which is a non-profit project dedicated to bringing contemporary Iranian literature to the world stage in multiple languages and media. Performing



our contemporary poetry in both Persian and English is the founder of The Translation Project and award-winning translator, **Niloufar Talebi**, along with the great tar master Sahba Motallebi in a dramatic presentation of poetry and music. In addition, we are screening The Translation Project's long-awaited DVD of short film based on contemporary Iranian poetry, *Midnight Approaches....* This project has won four major US translation awards. For more information and a preview of the films, visit www.thetranslationproject.com



SITE DÉCOR – CELEBRATING NATURE

There is a lot of symbolism to the Persian Festival of Mehregan. As you walk into the site, you will walk through a path that takes you back over 3000 years. Every area of the site is decorated in all colors of autumn. Décor created by **Ms. Mitra Azar**, uses the colors of sun, yellow to orange to red as well as lavender (reflective of Cyrus era).

In Pahlavi, Sun means Mehr and Mehregan is the celebration of the sun and the welcoming of winter ahead. The ceremony of Mehregan lasted 6 days. Ms. Azar craftfully designs a special Mehregan's table called



Sofreh-e Mehregan (Here is Iran). The table consists of the following items: set of 12 candles that symbolizes the 12 angels that are guardians of each month of the year. Set of 7 candles that represent the 7th month of the year. (Mehregan is the 7th month of Iranian calendar). Fire in the middle of the table. Iranians were always the keepers and holders of the fire. (The fire in the Temple of Azargoshasb burnt un-interrupted for over 700 years). Mirror - sign of purity Red wine - sign of cleansing and happiness. (Kings of Achaemenid Dynasty were only allowed to drink wine when celebrating Mehregan). Two

identical sunflower arrangements on both sides of the table - One symbolized the sun and one the reflection of the sun- the earth. Seven fruits, such as: Orange, white grapes, Pomegranate and seven sweets symbolizing the harvest and agriculture.

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Dr. Shahnad Kim who has invested much time in researching and creating many posters which are an invaluable source of information relating to the significant contributions made by many of Iran's renowned poets, mathematicians and physicians in the world of science. They will be at the Sofreh Mehregan.

We invite everyone to visit the Mehregan Sofreh and experience its rich heritage and get in touch with the 'Real Iran'.

BUSINESS EXPO AT MEHREGAN



Iranian-Americans have achieved prominence in every aspect of business and the professions, from high-tech to education and the arts. They are founders or have leadership roles at many Fortune 500 companies. They work at well known entities as eBay, Google, CNN, UCLA, MIT, and NASA. Many Iranian and American owned businesses use Mehregan Festival to exhibit their products and services. This large tent holds over 100

exhibit booths featuring many products and services from elegant Persian rugs to modern technology.

MEHREGAN ORGANIZERS

Mehregan Persian Festival is organized by many volunteers who have worked very hard for over five months to organize this great event. The team is called the 'Mehregan Organizing Committee'. In addition there are several teams that are assigned a specific task such as youth, children, provinces, etc. A number of non-profit civic and educational institutions help various programs and activities. Overall, more than 200 volunteers work hard for the success of this great festival. We are grateful to all of them. Team names and members is list available at www.nipoc.org/mehregan