Syrian Culture & the Refugee Crisis*

In Arab societies, a warm welcome and hospitality is always expected. “Ahlan wa Sahlan” is a common Arabic greeting and literally means “welcome”. Here are some key facts to get to know our Syrian neighbors in Scranton, a city that also has a long history of welcoming residents from distant shores.

**Food & Culture:** Food is an important part of many celebrations in Syria, including weddings, parties and other festivities. Roughly 87 percent of Syrians are Muslim, 10 percent Christian, and 3 percent Druze. Arabic is the main language spoken. Traditional arts are often expressed through dances, such as the Dabkeh.

**Civil War & Refugee Crisis:** Syria has been embroiled in civil war since 2011, with great suffering for the people of the country. The conflict is estimated to have killed as many as 470,000 people. More than 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced and more than 4.6 million refugees, 50% of whom are children, have fled Syria in search of safety and security.

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**About Global Tastes:** University and community partners have come together to welcome and learn from our newest Scrantonians. This project aims to increase awareness of diverse cultures in our region and empower and support refugee populations in the Scranton area. Women who participate in **Global Tastes** will be invited to join existing small business development activities.

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**Event Partners:** The University of Scranton: Office of Community and Government Relations, Campus Ministries’ Center for Service and Social Justice, Small Business Development Center, Cross Cultural Centers; and Community Partners: Terra Preta restaurant, Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton, Greenhouse Project, Scranton Tomorrow, and Scranton Area Community Foundation.

**Sponsors:** Diversity Initiatives Grant through the University’s Office of Equity and Diversity, Lackawanna Heritage Valley, and One Point.

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**Stay Involved:** To make a donation or volunteer to support the local refugee resettlement efforts of Catholic Social Services, visit: cssdioceseofscranton.org. To receive notifications of future events, email community@scranton.edu.

*Sources: United Nations, US. Department of State, Syrian Center for Policy Research, Jesuit Refugee Service*
Mutabal (Eggplant dip)

Wash 1 large eggplant (about 1 lb.). Grill it whole until fully cooked and soft throughout. Let cool 15-20 minutes. Once cool, halve, peel, and cut into 1-inch chunks. Pulse eggplant in a food processor with 1/4 cup tahini, 3/4 cup Greek yogurt, 3 garlic cloves (mashed), and 1 tsp. lemon juice until it reaches a smooth texture. Scoop mixture into a bowl; season with salt and pepper. Drizzle with 2 tbsp. olive oil. Refrigerate for at least an hour. Serve cold with toasted pita bread or fresh cut veggies.