



# 14<sup>th</sup> Annual CHICAGO TURKISH FESTIVAL

August 24-27, 2016  
Daley Plaza, Chicago

## **ABOUT THE CHICAGO TURKISH FESTIVAL**

The Annual Chicago Turkish Festival continues entertaining its visitors and introducing Turkish heritage and hospitality to the culturally diverse community of Chicago and the Midwest successfully for the last 13 years. For a decade, the festival was held in the heart of downtown Chicago at Daley Plaza across from the City Hall after its debut in 2003. In 2015, the festival returned to Daley Plaza after being held at another prime Chicago location along the Michigan Avenue, Pioneer Court in 2013 and 2104. Reinvent and revamping itself each year, the Chicago Turkish Festival has become a model and an inspiration for many ethnic groups in Chicago and was declared as "the richest and best organized ethnic festival" by the City of Chicago.

This document explains how the festival came about, how preparations are carried out, how performing groups are selected and how the festival is funded. Should you have questions that are not covered by the answers below, you can email us at [info@chicagoturkishfestival.org](mailto:info@chicagoturkishfestival.org)



**M.K.Ataturk**  
**Founder of the Turkish**  
**Republic**

## ***How did the idea of organizing a festival come about?***

Back in 2003, the Turkish-American community in Chicago had been planning a cultural activity geared towards promoting Turkish heritage and culture for some time. This activity could have been a "Turkish Week" celebrated at different venues, a "Turkish Parade" on the streets like the annual New York City parade, or a week long festival in a central location in Chicago. Thanks to the great efforts of the Turkish Consul General of Chicago, his excellency Naci Koru and the president of the Turkish-American Cultural Alliance (TACA), Mehmet Celebi at the time, after several meetings with the City of Chicago, the Daley Plaza became the ground to hold the annual Chicago Turkish Festival.

The first festival was promptly planned and successfully held between September 15 -17, 2003.



**Location of Turkiye on the Globe**

## ***What is the purpose of the Chicago Turkish Festival?***

The purpose of the Chicago Turkish Festival is to introduce Turkish heritage and hospitality with its art, culture, turizm, music, and cuisine to our American friends. Therefore, instead of a parade, a week-long activity at a prime location was decided to be more effective in promoting Turkey and Turkish heritage. The positive feedback, praise, and warm welcome we received confirms how correct the decision was,

and we are grateful to Chicago for the opportunity.

### ***When and where is the festival held?***

Until 2013, the Chicago Turkish Festival was held in the heart of downtown Chicago at the Daley Plaza across from City Hall since its debut in 2003. The First Chicago Turkish Festival was held for 3 days, but due to popular demand, the following year it was held



for 6 days. Since 2005, the festival was planned for 4 days, starting on a Wednesday and ending on Saturday. Last two years, the Turkish community had the opportunity to hold the festival at Pioneer Court on Michigan Avenue, which was the first cultural event of this scope at such prime location. Pioneer Court festivals were held for two days (Friday-Saturday), with an Opening Gala in the evening of Thursday where Chicago's prominent business, political and diplomatic leaders were invited and a fundraising auction was successfully held to

benefit the United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation in 2013 and the Les Turner ALS Foundation in 2014. Every year the Festival turns into a real "Turkish Fiesta" with the opening and closing ceremonies with the participation of thousands of in- and out-of-town Americans pouring to visit. 2015 Festival returned to its 4-day format at the Daley Plaza and this year will again be held at the Daley between August 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> in 2016.

### ***Approximately how many people visit the festival?***

Since the festival is held at the heart of downtown Chicago, tens of thousands of visitors get to enjoy the festival daily. The festival area gets very crowded especially during the lunch hours when various cultural and art performances take place on stage. Based on the statistics of the pedestrian traffic at the Daley Plaza and City Hall, it is estimated that over 100,000 people visited the festival grounds annually, which was much higher at the Pioneer Court in 2013 and 2014.

The interest of the American and Turkish media in our festival continued increasing every year, and numerous representatives of media aired the memorable activities on their channels. You can view the coverage of the Chicago Turkish Festival under "Media Coverage" on our website.

### ***Who organizes the Chicago Turkish Festival?***

Our festival is organized by the Turkish American community, with the support of the Turkish Consulate General of Chicago. The Turkish-American Cultural Alliance (TACA) and the Festival Committee carry on the majority of the responsibilities of coordinating the festival efforts.

The Festival Organizing Committee starts preparations 7-8 months prior to the festival date, decides on the theme and region to be invited to that year's festival, and elect the Committee Chairs. The Festival Organizing Committee members continue meeting at the Turkish Consulate General as often as needed depending on their duties and responsibilities. Prior to and during the festival, these daily duties and responsibilities of the festival are carried out by hundreds of generous and dedicated volunteers. We owe the success of our festival to their selfless contributions.



**Pamukkale, Denizli**

The Festival preparations could be enjoyable yet very challenging and exhausting due to the fast-pace and demanding responsibilities and work required for the festival. The committee president(s) especially has strenuous and important responsibilities, and we would like to thank each and every one of them who held this position successfully in the past: Bora Esenler (2003), Burcu Agar (2004, 2010), Yucel Olcer (2005), Hatice Dinc (2006, 2009), Sevil Kutay (2007), Hasan Yavas (2008), Kemal Ozer and Ilgaz Ulger (2009), Sehnaz Engur and Baris Tasdelen (2010), Naile Berna Kovuk & Hatice Dinc (2011), Sevil Kutay & Hayati Turan (2012), Sevil Kutay & Sehnaz Engur (2013), Sevil Kutay & Hayati Turan (2014 and 2015), and Orhangazi Ilgaz Ulger & Sevil Kutay (2016).

### ***Who performs and participates at the festival?***



The majority of groups performing at the festival come from Turkey by invitation. The Fashion show, folklore dancers, Ottoman Military Marching Band (Mehter) and the Whirling Dervishes make up the main performing groups at the festival.

Visitors also watch, learn, and enjoy live demonstrations of carpet weaving, calligraphy, paper marbling, ceramic art, shadow theatre, etc. All performed by Turkish artists. The number of participants and exhibitors both from Turkey and the U.S. grows each year. Since the aim of the festival is to promote Turkish culture and art, we

require the applicants to display items that will serve this purpose and fit within that category only.

Please refer to the "Participate" section of our web site or email us at: [info@chicagoturkishfestival.org](mailto:info@chicagoturkishfestival.org) for participation information and agreements.

### ***Who covers the cost of the festival?***

The Festival budget is allocated to promoting, advertising, organizing the festival, setting up the festival tents and exhibits, and hosting numerous cultural and art groups locally and from Turkey. We receive contributions from our official sponsors, exhibitors, participants, and individual friends of the festival, as well as the Turkish Cultural Promotion Fund.

### ***How can one become a sponsor of the festival?***

There are several different levels of sponsorships for supporting the Chicago Turkish Festival. Additionally, it is possible to sponsor festival as a "Friend of the Festival" or as a "Service or Product Sponsor".

Please refer to the "Sponsor Us" section of our web site or email us at: [info@chicagoturkishfestival.org](mailto:info@chicagoturkishfestival.org) for further information and sponsorship agreement.



**Zeus Temple**

If you would like to get further information about the festival, see the participants, sponsors and photos from previous festivals you can visit our website at [www.chicagoturkishfestival.org](http://www.chicagoturkishfestival.org).

**THANK YOU...**