

KURDISH CULTURAL TIPS

FAMILY

- Kurds are part of a highly communal society, where the needs of the individual are subservient to the needs of the wider family/tribe/community. This creates a close-knit society where people are interdependent on one another, sharing resources (including finances) across extended family lines.
- Family units are often multi-generational, and marriage between first cousins is common in Kurdistan. Respect for elders is paramount.
- Children are highly valued and loved by the whole family, but child-raising practices are typically much less structured than in Canada.

RELIGION

- The vast majority of Kurds are Muslim. The younger generation tends to be more secular, while retaining religious practices as a way to remain connected to the wider community and hold onto their Kurdish identity.
- While devoutness to formal religious practices may vary, Kurds have a very strong sense of the existence of the unseen spiritual world.

GENEROSITY

- Kurds will be very generous in serving food to guests, whether or not the visit involves a meal.
- Small gifts (a piece of jewelry or an item of clothing) are often given, especially at the beginning of a relationship, to symbolize the desire for friendship.
- It is common to share food with neighbours: a child might be sent over with homemade naan bread, holiday cookies, or a portion of a large meal that has been just cooked.

GOOD MANNERS

- When meeting someone, it is important to inquire about someone's broader family and not just the individual.
 - Kurds tend to leave a visit quickly when it concludes; this is not a sign of rudeness, disrespect or dislike.
 - They will typically ask you to stay for a meal; this is common courtesy and part of good manners. Insistence of the invitation several times will confirm the sincerity of the offer.
 - When hosting a Kurdish visitor, make sure to bring a glass of water without being asked. As well, it is common to bring bowls of nuts, sweets and/or fruit, and offer tea/coffee/juice. Tea and coffee are always served without milk but with lots of sugar. Fruit is always cut with a knife before being eaten.
 - When cooking a meal for Kurdish friends, do not serve pork. Chicken, beef, sheep and fish are normal.
 - It's important to be considerate of varying modesty standards, especially for women, when hosting or visiting with Kurds. It's advisable to keep your shoulders and upper arms covered, avoid tight-fitting clothing, wear pants or longer skirts, and ensure your behind is covered as well.
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