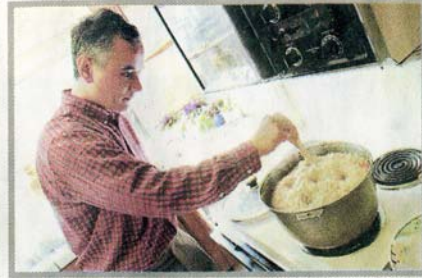


Contra Costa SUN

It's onward
and upward

Acalanes switches
focus from DFAL to
NCS competition.

Sports, Page 7



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

Stirring up a
taste of Asia

Jamshid Avlynov cooks
a traditional dish from
his native Uzbekistan.

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With whirling dervish, a custom is saved

By Jackie Burrell
STAFF WRITER

The dancers step, sweep and turn, their skirts swirling to the hypnotic beat of drum and Persian setar. A sweep of the arm to shoulder level, a coquettish glance back, and then a fluid gesturing through the air, almost like water tumbling — "abshar."

It is Wednesday at the Orinda Community Center. Down the hall, a lacrosse club meets and tap dancers syncope. But in the ballet studio, Shazzy Khorsandi and her dancers, teens and adults, move across the floor. Their images are reflected in the mirrors and Persian culture is mirrored in their movements. As Khorsandi calls the steps — yuresh, del roba, abshar — they lunge, sway and gesture.

For some of the participants, the ancient Persian dance form is a chance to recapture their heritage. For others, it is a compelling, unusual art form. But for Khorsandi, teaching Persian dance is a mission. It keeps an ancient culture alive and



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

PEGAH BADI, right, and Shaya Geuder dance in a Persian dance class in Orinda.

founded the Shahrzad Dance Academy to preserve, teach and

"Classical Persian dance is a tradition, passed on from genera-

tinct customs and traditions, and their dance styles reflect

New restaurant will offer a taste of the City

By Meera Pal
STAFF WRITER

The taste of San Francisco is making its way to Lafayette.

One of the quintessential San Francisco restaurants — Chow — will make its grand opening in June at La Fiesta Square.

Two years ago, when Tony Gulisano moved to Lafayette with his wife, Lori, and their sons, he never imagined he would open a restaurant in their new hometown. And then he thought, "Why not his new hometown? There is nothing more personal than feeding your community."

The successful San Francisco restaurateur was looking for a third location to open his hugely popular Chow restaurant. The two outfits in the City were doing well — the one in the Castro on Church and Market was the place to be for singles and the other in the

each restaurant has its own special qualities.

The site of his third restaurant was settled when he found the roughly 4,000 sq. ft. space in La Fiesta Square. The former site of the Lafayette Farms produce market will soon house a hip, lively restaurant, designed specifically with Lafayette in mind.

"This is a very sophisticated outfit," says Craig Semmel-meyer, president of Main Street Retail Services, property manager for La Fiesta Square. "Tony is really taking his knowledge of the community and creating something for the residents. He has evolved his concept to fit into the Lafayette lifestyle."

Like Gulisano has done with his previous two locales, he is designing the restaurant's interior and services with an eye to the community. This is not too difficult, since he feels the market is extraordinarily underserved.

Dance

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mies, low to the ground ... Everyone has his own way of doing it, but it all fits the same style.”

Familiar ballet postures are echoed in Khorsandi's classes. The dancers stretch through plies, move into second and third position, but the stylized hand and wrist movements are far more exotic than anything the Bolshoi delivers. Wrists swivel, shoulders roll and fingers beckon. To the layman, the dance steps seem to combine ballet's formality, belly dancing's undulations and the expressive hands of the hula.

“(Persian dance) is more ornamental, spiritual. It expresses emotion and mood, but not specifically to tell a story,” says Khorsandi. “We always work on a choreography, adding to it each week. It's really neat to see the kids try it. They pick it up so quickly.”

As class starts, the dancers enter the room, doff their street shoes and begin stretching. The women wear flowing skirts,



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

SANA WEBB, right, Barbara Snyder, center, and Brenda Ameli do a Persian dance at the Orinda Community Center.

teens wear jeans or sweats. And Khorsandi gently teases a girl in a Campolindo sweatshirt, “Miramonte rules!”

Jilla Rahimi watches her eighth grade daughter from the sidelines. “My mom is Persian and I'm half-Persian, so it's good to learn about it,” says Shaya Rahimi. “The next thing is belly dancing, after you learn the basics.”

Jilla nods approvingly, “We come from San Ramon all the

way up here. She's a bit of a tomboy and this has a lot of feminine rhythm to it.”

The rhythm of the setar flows, the class begins, and Khorsandi calls the steps. Skirts swirl, arms sweep, and an ancient culture dances across the floor — seh gaam, jonbesh, abshar.

For more information on Persian dance, visit www.shahrzad-danceacademy.org.