

# Centrum

Travel magazine

Nº5 | Spring 2025



Every story begins  
with a cup of tea

Navruz: a celebration  
of renewal and unity

Uzbek Wedding  
Through the Ages

The Art of Taste:  
Cantonese Cuisine



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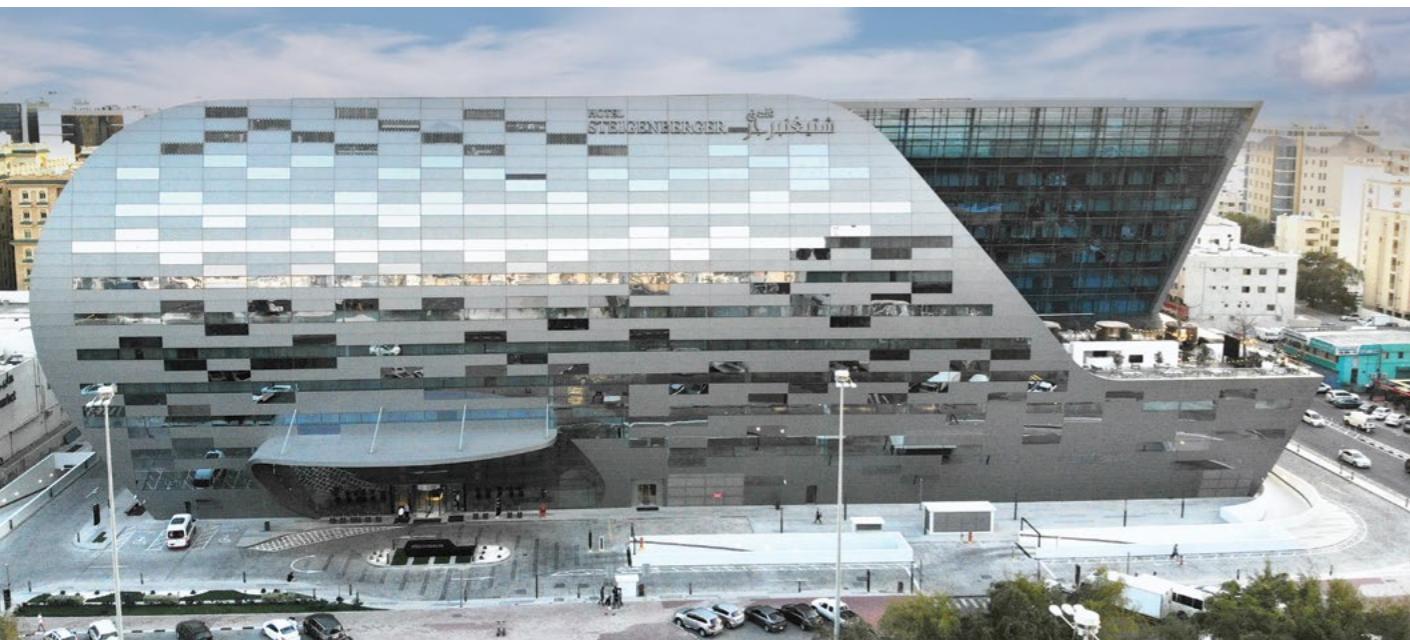
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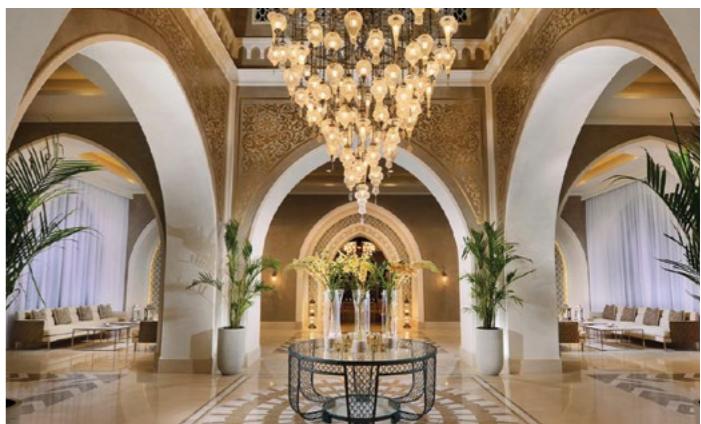


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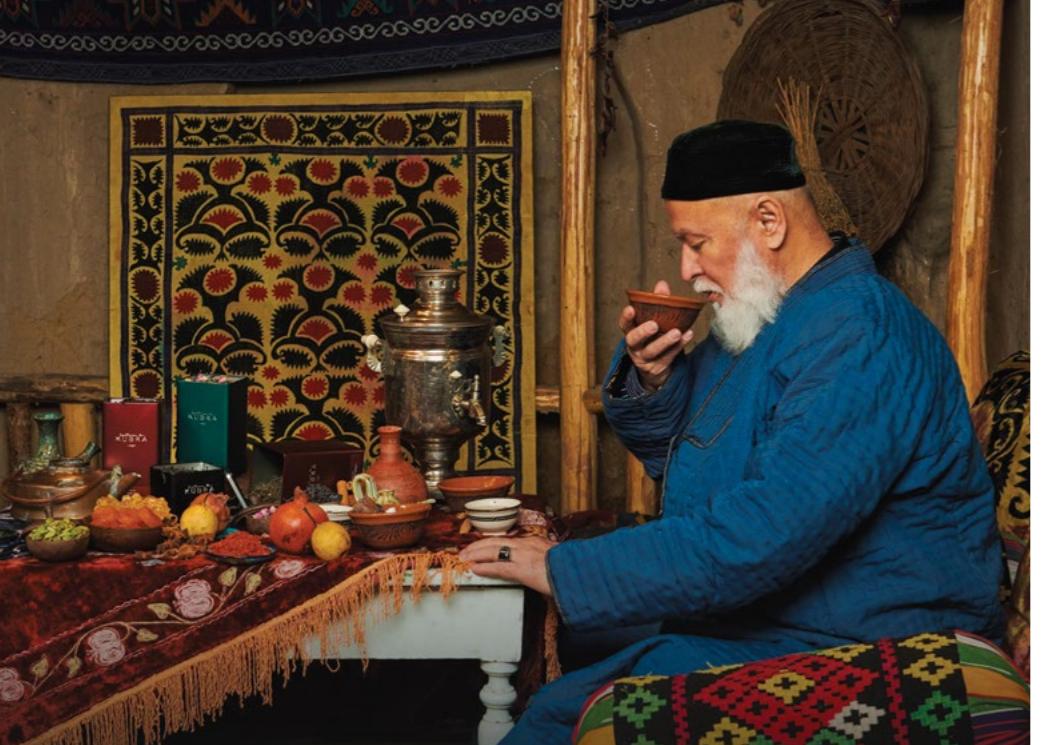


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## Dear Friends!

Spring is a time of blossoming, renewal, and moving forward. Nature awakens, infusing us with energy and reminding us of the timeless values that bring generations together. In this issue of Centrum Travel Magazine, we turn to traditions – the foundations that connect us to the past, help us build the future, and bring us closer to one another.

Uzbekistan, Georgia, and China are countries with a rich cultural heritage, where traditions are passed down from generation to generation, carefully preserved, and adapted to modern times. Among them, the value of family holds a special place as the main pillar and source of strength. Family is not just about blood ties but also about unity of spirit, support, and loyalty.

These are the very bonds that unite me with my friend and ally, Hafizjon Gafurov. We grew up together, went through a lot, overcame many challenges, and today, side by side, we continue to develop Centrum Holding, moving toward new horizons.

Spring is a time of growth, and our company is also awakening to new achievements. This year, we are expanding our fleet and launching over 40 new routes, creating even more opportunities for our clients and partners. May this spring bring you inspiration, new beginnings, and the joy of meaningful encounters! Listen to the awakening of nature, cherish traditions, and build your future with confidence and love.

Respectfully,  
General Director of Centrum Holdings  
**Abdulaziz Abdurakhmonov**



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Centrum Air offers affordable and convenient flights on modern aircraft. We are constantly expanding our route network and enhancing our services, with plans to grow our fleet to 14 aircraft and add 15 new destinations this year.



Centrum Holidays, officially recognized as a national tour operator since late 2024, specializes in comprehensive inbound and outbound tourism. We have developed 13 tour programs across the most picturesque locations, secured 500 direct contracts with hotels, engaged 350 professional guides, and established partnerships with 2,300 travel agencies. With Centrum Holidays, we are opening Uzbekistan to the world—and the world to you.

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My Freight is the leading cargo airline in Central Asia, specializing in commercial freight transportation and handling over 60% of Uzbekistan's air cargo. Our primary goal is to ensure reliable deliveries, supporting businesses and trade connections worldwide. This year, we plan to expand our fleet to 13 aircraft, making freight transportation even faster and more efficient.

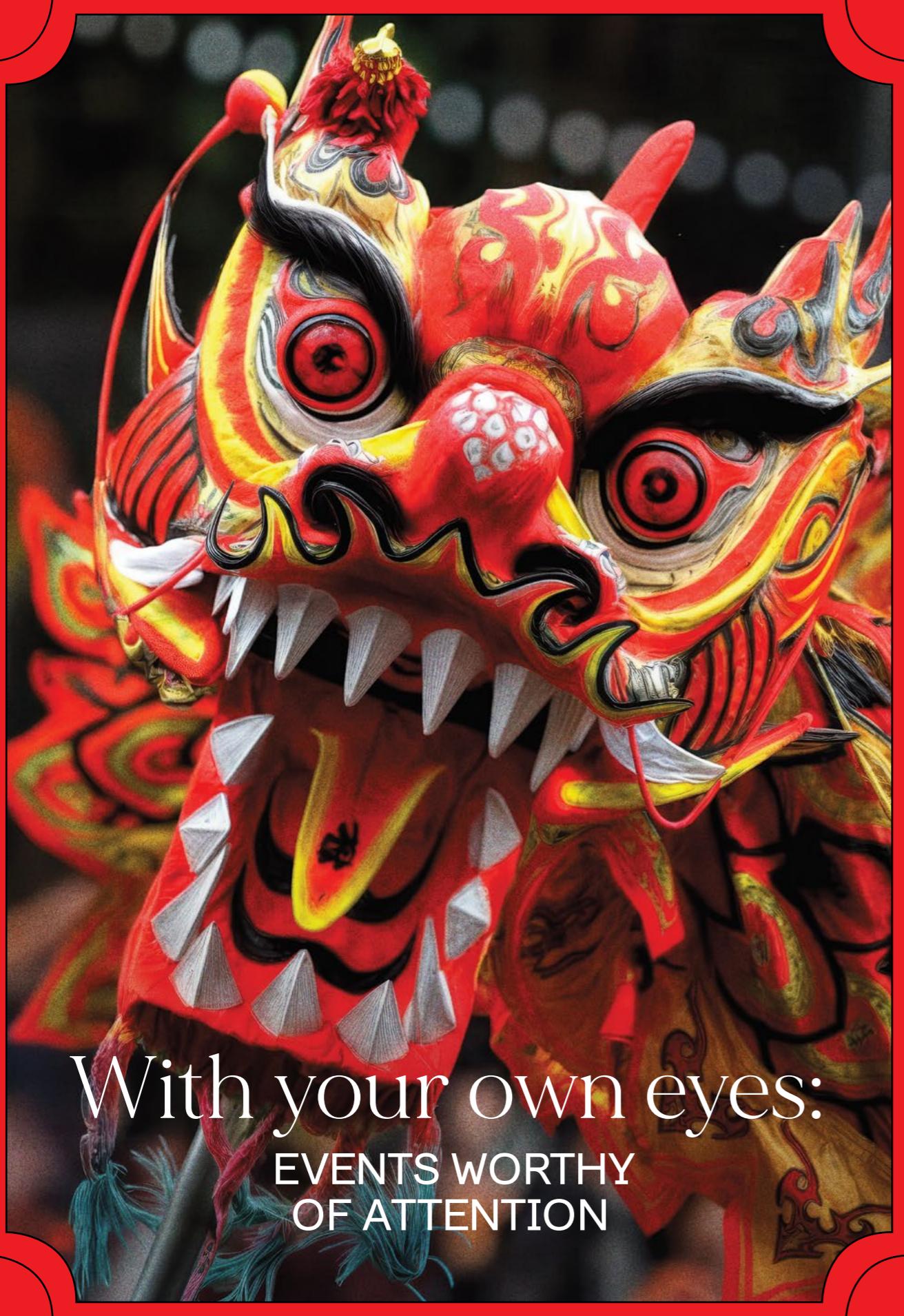


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With your own eyes:  
EVENTS WORTHY  
OF ATTENTION



**ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL OPERA AND BALLET FESTIVAL**

**When:** March 19 – April 28  
**Where:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan

This grand celebration of art will showcase unique productions by leading choreographers and directors from around the world. Expect a harmonious blend of classics and modernity, fresh interpretations of renowned works, and bold artistic visions.



**FOOTBALL MATCH: GEORGIA VS. ARMENIA**

**When:** March 23  
**Where:** Tbilisi, Georgia

A UEFA Nations League match between the national teams of Georgia and Armenia will be held at the Mikheil Meskhi Stadium in Tbilisi. Fans are going to be looking forward to the many exciting moments, the spirit of competition, and unwavering support for their favorite teams in an atmosphere of football celebration. This match offers sports fans an excellent opportunity to enjoy an exciting evening at one of the region's top stadiums.



### CONCERT BY THOMAS ANDERS

When: March 27

Where: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The legendary Thomas Anders will perform a solo concert at the Peoples' Friendship Palace. The program will feature hits from the group Modern Talking and the best songs from his solo albums. For over 40 years, the

musician has won millions of hearts all over the world, with his records being sold over 125 million copies. The concert promises to be an unforgettable evening filled with charisma, style, and favorite melodies.



### GUANGZHOU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONCERT

When: March 28

Where: Xinghai Concert Hall, Guangzhou, China

On March 28, 2025, the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra will perform at the Xinghai Concert Hall in Guangzhou. The program will feature works by great composers: Khovanshchina. Prelude (Dawn on the Moscow River) by M. Mussorgsky (orchestrated by D.

Shostakovich), Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor by S. Prokofiev, and Symphony No. 4 in E minor by J. Brahms. This concert promises to be a musical journey through masterpieces of classical music, performed with virtuosic precision and exquisite refinement.

### CONCERT BY CHENGDU ZHIGENG CHAMBER CHOIR

When: March 29

Where: Guangzhou, China

The Chengdu Zhigeng Chamber Choir, founded by conductor Luo Le, will present the concert "Sichuan-Guangdong Live Line" at the opera hall of the Guangzhou Grand Theatre, featuring Chinese classical and popular compositions. The choir, which gained fame in the internet, has gathered a large audience and released works that have been widely discussed on social media. The concert program will include popular Cantonese songs and unique pieces of music. Audiences will also have the opportunity to engage directly with the choir in an interactive "zero-distance" experience. The choir is known for its active touring schedule and recognition in the Chinese music scene.



### ICE SHOW BY ETERI TUTBERIDZE: TEAM TUTBERIDZE

When: April 5

Where: Tashkent

Humo Arena will host a grand ice show by Eteri Tutberidze, one of the most prominent coaches in the world of figure skating. You will enjoy performances by figure skating stars Sofia Akatova, Evgenia Medvedeva, Alina Zagitova, Adelia Petrosyan, as well as spectacular performances by Sergey Dudakov and Daniil Gleichen-gauz. This evening promises to be unforgettable thanks to the skill, grace and incredible energy of the skaters. It's a unique opportunity to see Olympic champions and rising stars in one spectacular show!



**SCRIPTONITE CONCERT****When:** April 5**Where:** Tbilisi, Georgia

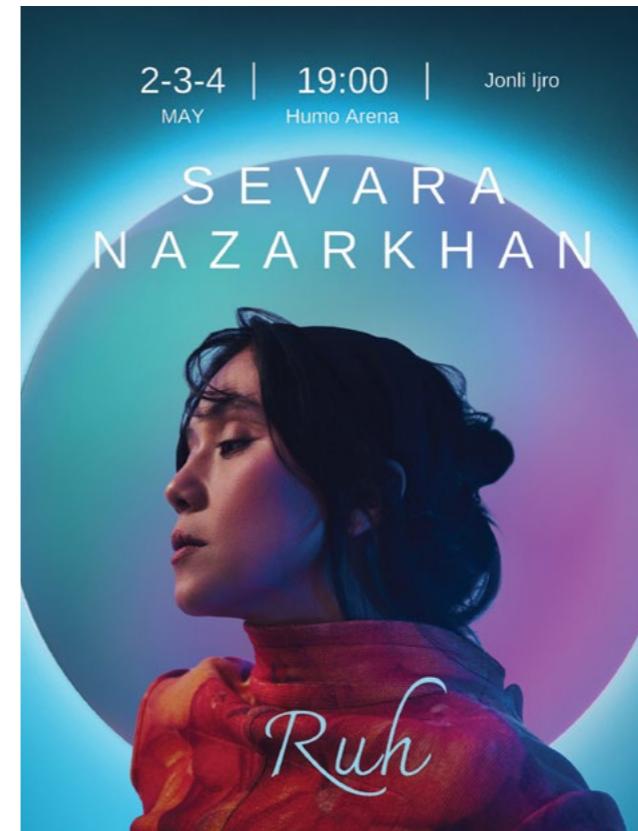
Famous Kazakh rap artist Scriptonite will perform a grand solo concert at the Sports Palace. The legendary artist will present his best hits and new compositions, combining his unique style and energy that have won the hearts of millions of listeners. For those who missed his concerts in Tashkent, this is a fantastic opportunity to combine a trip to Tbilisi with an unforgettable musical evening.

**PIAZZOLLA: TANGO PASSION STEPHANIE ORTEGA TRIO CONCERT****When:** April 11**Where:** Experimental Theatre of the Guangzhou Grand Theatre

The trio, featuring soprano Stéphanie Ortega, accordionist Christophe Delporte, and double bassist Adriano Taberheim, will perform a concert on the experimental stage of the Guangzhou Grand Theatre in honor of the great composer Astor Piazzolla. His music, full of vibrant rhythms and emotions, will be presented in an interesting interpretation and original arrangement, blending classical with elements of popular and electronic music. Dedicated to Piazzolla's "New Tango," the concert promises to be a brilliant and unforgettable musical event.

**CANTON FAIR****When:** April 15 — May 5**Where:** Guangzhou, China

The famous Canton Fair, also known as the China Import and Export Fair, is the largest trade fair in China, featuring products of all categories—from souvenirs to automobiles and industrial equipment. Held since 1957 in Guangzhou, the fair is considered a "barometer of international Chinese trade," offering attendees the chance to discover and purchase virtually any product made in China. The fair attracts thousands of participants and buyers from around the world, and its impact on global trade cannot be overstated.

**SEVARA NAZARKHAN CONCERT****When:** May 2-4**Where:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Immerse yourself in a unique musical journey with Sevara Nazarkhan, an honored artist of Uzbekistan who masterfully blends tradition with modernity in her music. This evening will be a passage through time and space, where sound, light, and emotions merge into a single whole. You will experience an atmosphere of depth and awareness, filled with enchanting music and heartfelt lyrics. Stunning visual design, spectacular performances, and Sevara's special energy will make this concert an unforgettable event!



### COFFEE&TEA FEST EXPO 2025

When: May 16–18  
Where: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Get ready for an unforgettable celebration of flavor, aroma, and creativity! Coffee&Tea Fest Expo 2025 will bring together the best baristas, artists, and musicians to offer guests a truly unique experience. Visitors can enjoy exciting championships, thrilling barista battles, exclusive lectures, and master classes, as well as artistic installations and themed photo zones. The Eastern bazaar will surprise you with rare tea and coffee varieties, while the food court will offer exquisite gastronomic pairings. In the concert zone, a grand show will unfold with live music, theatrical performances, and sets from more than 40 DJs. A special City Kids area will be available for young guests.

### CONCERT BY ROCK BAND "SPLEAN"

When: May 10  
Where: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The legendary rock band Splean will perform a grand solo concert at the Alisher Navoi Cinema Palace (Panoramic Hall). The program will include well-known hits that have become the soundtrack of many generations' lives, as well as new compositions revealing fresh facets of the band's creativity. Over 30 years on stage, Splean has won the hearts of millions with their profound lyrics and unique inimitable sound. The concert promises to be an emotional journey from quiet melancholy to powerful rock drive.

### CONCERT BY GUNS N' ROSES

When: May 30  
Where: Batumi, Georgia

The legendary band Guns N' Roses will perform at the picturesque Shekvetili Park, located on the Black Sea coast. This concert venue is known for its unique acoustics and stunning natural surroundings, making it an ideal location for large-scale musical events. Guns N' Roses will perform their greatest hits, which have conquered the hearts of millions of people across the world. The concert in Batumi will be part of their world tour and you have a unique chance to be a part of this grand evening.



### LUCA STRICAGNOLI CONCERT

When: June 6  
Where: Guangzhou, China

Virtuoso guitarist Luca Stricagnoli will perform a grand solo concert at SD Livehouse. This unique musician, famous for his incredible arrangements and masterful ability to play multiple guitars simultaneously, promises an unforgettable evening filled with raw emotions and sonic experiments. The program includes original compositions that have become his signature pieces, as well as unique interpretations of global hits, reimagined in his distinctive style. His unparalleled playing technique and expressive performance turn every concert into a mesmerizing musical journey that captivates and inspires.



### SOLO PIANO CONCERT BY SANDRO GEGECHKORI

**When:** June 20  
**Where:** Tbilisi, Georgia

Renowned pianist Sandro Gegechkori will perform a solo piano concert at the Grand Hall of the Tbilisi State Conservatory. The program will feature works by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, and Prokofiev, highlighting his virtuosity, emotional depth, and unique performance style. Sandro Gegechkori is a winner of numerous international competitions, including one of the most prestigious—the Maria Canals International Piano Competition. He is an artist of the World Federation of International Music Competitions and collaborates with leading orchestras in Tbilisi, Madrid, Granada, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bilbao, and other cities.



### SOLO PIANO CONCERT BY AN TIANXU

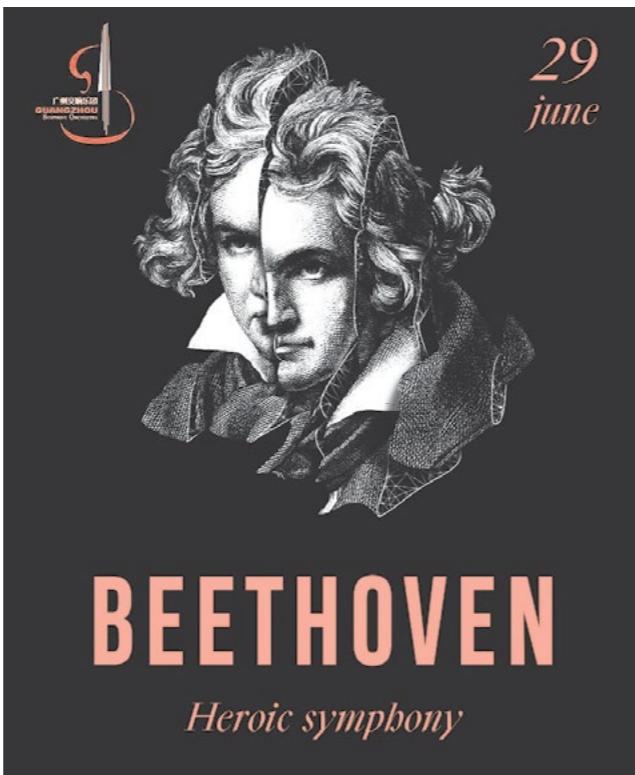
**When:** July 27  
**Where:** Guangzhou, China

One of China's most brilliant pianists, An Tianxu, will perform a solo recital at Xinghai Concert Hall. The evening's program is dedicated to the art of the fugue, a complex and multifaceted genre where a musical theme evolves through counterpoint and polyphony. The Chinese virtuoso will present works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Johannes Brahms, César Franck, and Dmitri Shostakovich, offering a journey through the evolution of the fugue over centuries and showcasing how each composer reimagined and enriched it in their own way. An Tianxu is a laureate of the XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition (2019), where he placed fourth and was the only participant to receive the Special Prize for Courage and Self-Control. His achievement was the best result for a Chinese pianist in 17 years at one of the world's most prestigious competitions, earning widespread recognition both in China and internationally.

### BEETHOVEN EVENING: VIOLIN CONCERTO & "EROICA" SYMPHONY

**When:** June 29  
**Where:** Guangzhou, China

The Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Huang Yi, will take the stage at the Xinghai Concert Hall to perform two of Beethoven's masterpieces: the legendary "Eroica" Symphony and the composer's only Violin Concerto. This concerto is considered one of the four greatest works ever written for violin and orchestra, known for its melodic grace, elegant style, and grand scale. The highlight of the evening will be a performance by Augustin Hadelich, one of today's most celebrated violinists, making his debut at Xinghai Concert Hall.



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# Navruz: A celebration of renewal and unity

**S**pring in Uzbekistan begins with one of the most vibrant events of the year — the ancient holiday of Navruz. Symbolizing the rebirth of nature and the renewal of life, it has become an integral part of the culture of the peoples living in many countries such as Azerbaijan, Albania, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan, India, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey. Moreover, Navruz is also celebrated as a regional holiday in Georgia, Macedonia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. We decided to delve into historical research to understand why this day is not only connected to the vernal equinox but also carries with it a much deeper meaning.

## History and legends

The name "Navruz" literally translates from Persian as "new day", and symbolizes the beginning of a new cycle of life. It first appeared in Persian sources in the 2nd century AD, though the holiday itself was already celebrated during the Achaemenid dynasty (648–330 BC) as a Zoroastrian festival. Over the centuries, Navruz has been associated with the start of the new year and was celebrated along the entire length of the Great Silk Road.

According to legends, Navruz is connected with the creation of the world and the beginning of life. In the Avesta — the holy book of the Zoroastrians, which tells of the creation of the universe and all living beings — it is stated: "Ahura Mazda created the world and all its components in six stages, but this did not happen all at once; it occurred at irregular intervals in six phases." These six stages of creation are called the "six festivals" or "gahanbar", and they are distributed as follows:

1. The first period of creation lasts forty-five days after the celebration of Navruz, during which the sky was created.
2. The second period occurs one hundred and five days after Navruz and is associated with the creation of water.
3. The third stage of creation occurs one hundred and eighty days after Navruz and is devoted to the creation of the Earth.
4. The fourth period occurs two hundred and ten days after Navruz, when plants were created.
5. The fifth stage occurs two hundred and ninety days after the festival, when animals were created.
6. The sixth stage of creation falls on the three hundred and sixty-fifth day after Navruz, which marks the end of the year and the creation of mankind. This stage is called "Hamaspath mайдым", meaning "equinox".



And every year in spring, it was customary to celebrate the renewal of life on Earth, which was reflected in these six manifestations: the sky, water, earth, plants, animals, and mankind. Moreover, there are several well-known Persian legends. One of the most popular is the story of King Jamshid, who gained great power over jinns and humans. On the day when the sun was in Aries, he ascended the throne, and his light illuminated the entire land. The people called this day "new", symbolizing the beginning of a new era. It is also interesting to mention the Kurdish legend of King Azdahak, against whom the people rebelled, lighting bonfires in the mountains to celebrate their liberation.

According to the most widespread version, Navruz is associated with the cult of the Sun and the name of the legendary prophet Zarathushtra (Zoroaster), which in Greek tradition means "Son of the Star". On this day, the ancient Aryan kings would have worn a crown with images of the annual solar cycle on their heads, participated in a divine mass in the Temple of Fire. Over time, this holiday became firmly established among the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus, who were influenced by Zoroastrian culture.

### The origin of Navruz and its connection to astronomy

Among other theories, one suggests that Navruz originated more than 5,000 years ago in the region of Ariana (Editor's note: presumably the area of Bactria), initially spreading as an agricultural festival linked to the creation of a calendar based on astronomical observations. Unlike the Gregorian, Arab, and Jewish calendars, it was tied to the positions of the Sun and planets, with particular attention given to Saturn, which the Persians referred to as Keyvan – "Lord of Time". Each year in this calendar had its own symbol—a sacred animal serving as the year's protector.

Navruz also has roots in fire worship, which was particularly relevant during the Achaemenid (6th–4th centuries BC) and Sassanian (3rd–7th centuries AD) eras. Chronicles mention celebrations of the spring/vernal equinox, during which rulers presented gifts to the Shahanshah (Editor's note: an ancient Persian title equivalent to "emperor"). This day became the official New Year holiday, and the custom of celebrating it spread among all peoples influenced by the Persian Empire.





## Preparation for the holiday

Navruz has its origins from the ancient forms of nature worship, particularly fire, making it one of the oldest and most symbolically rich holidays. It is not just a day of celebration but a vital ritual that, over centuries, has accumulated traditions and beliefs, giving rise to numerous customs and ceremonies associated with fertility, renewal, and reverence for the forces of nature. It is believed that the brighter and more joyful the Navruz is celebrated, the more generous nature will be in return. At the same time, the holiday embodies the triumph of good over evil and symbolizes the birth of a new world.

The rituals of Navruz are described in detail in the "Avesta", but information about them became available owing to the French linguist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), who translated it into French. His translation, published in Paris in 1771 and accompanied by scholarly comments, was unique for its time and opened a new chapter in the study of ancient culture and traditions.

From this work, we learn that Navruz requires meticulous preparation. Weeks before the holiday, "hashars"—collective efforts to clean, improve and landscape the areas—are held across the country. People tidy up and decorate their homes and streets, plant trees and flowers. This activity culminates in communal feasts with aromatic pilaf, songs, and dances.



## Traditions and treats

Many traditions and customs of Navruz are linked to ancient legends. For example, dances and performances depicted myths of the deity Siyavush, symbolizing life, death, and rebirth. These legends are reflected in national dances, such as Katta Uyin ("The Great Game"), which remains an important part of stage performances to this day. Overall, Navruz attracts the attention of scholars and art historians due to its connection with dance compositions that narrate the life cycle—from birth to rebirth. Every gesture and movement in these dances carried profound sacred meaning. The same "Katta Uyin" dance has preserved elements of ancient rituals and symbolizes the cycles of life, death, and rebirth. This dance existed even during the era of Alexander the Great (3rd-4th centuries BC).

In the early 20th century, based on these ancient rhythms and movements, folk artists Tamara Khanum and Usta Alim Kamilov created a staged version of "Katta Uyin". Today, this dance, choreographed by the legendary Mukarram Turgunbaeva, remains one of the most beloved and sought-after performances in the repertoire of the State Dance Ensemble "Bakhor". Filled with grace and dignity, the dance, despite losing its original storyline, has become a true symbol of Uzbek choreography. It is an important part of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage, as is the Navruz holiday itself, which encompasses numerous rituals and traditions that reflect the deep historical and spiritual connections of the people with nature and time.

Traditionally, March in Zoroastrian culture was called "Farvardin" and was dedicated to ancestors. It was believed that during the week preceding Navruz, the souls of deceased relatives return to earth, and during this time, people make offerings and ask for their help.



The main dish of Navruz is sumalak, prepared by collective joint effort. This sweet dessert made from sprouted wheat is cooked overnight in large cauldrons. The process is accompanied by jokes, songs, and dances, and anyone who finds a nut or a small pebble in the dish can make a wish. Traditionally, women take turns stirring the sumalak to prevent it from burning, and in the morning, it is shared among everyone who participated in its preparation.

The celebration begins before dawn, when the entire family, dressed in new clothes, gathers around the table, which is set with new dishes. The table set up on Navruz is called "haft-sin". The table is set with seven items, each beginning with the letter "sin" in the Persian alphabet. These include rue seeds (sipand), apple (sib), caraway seeds (siyahdane), wild olive (sanjud), vinegar (sirke), garlic (sir), and sprouted grain (sabzi). These seven magical items symbolize an offering to the Sun, which, by accepting them, ensures a bountiful harvest in the new year. It is also important to feed not only close family but also neighbors and guests, and to help the poor and the elderly.

Traditionally, before Navruz, one should repent for his/her sins, reconcile with enemies, repay debts, and forgive others. During the days of Navruz, good angels (farishte) bring abundance and prosperity to those who are pure in heart, who have freed their hearts from grievances, and who maintain order in their homes. People believed that the clean environment surrounding a person reflects the clarity of his inner state, so before the holiday the owners tend to keep their houses clean, whitewash the walls and make minor repairs. Another interesting custom is to invite the first guest into the house, who is considered a symbol of future well-being. If the guest is kind and cheerful, the year promises to be successful.





## Holiday festivities

The grand celebrations of Navruz were widespread in Sogdiana and Ancient Khorezm. These celebrations included various rituals, with singing, music, and dance playing a major role. Researchers have documented descriptions of this holiday: "...the celebration begins with a grand procession attended by the governor. Dervishes and Qalandars lead the way, singing and dancing; they are followed by officials and akhuns (Editor's note: high-ranking scholars) ... The festivities culminate with songs and dances performed by both men and women," or: "The people, dressed in new clothes and adorning their hats with flowers, gather at the highest places outside the city; there, to the sounds of tambourines/drums, nays (Editor's note: the nay is an Uzbek folk musical instrument similar to a flute), and other musical instruments, they enjoy horse races and archery contests".

## Navruz in modern Uzbekistan

Over the centuries, our history has undergone significant changes: dynasties have risen and fallen, religious beliefs have changed, yet the tradition of celebrating Navruz has been preserved and deeply rooted itself in the daily lives of the peoples of Central Asia. To this day, it is celebrated on a grand scale with state support. In modern Uzbekistan, mass celebrations are held annually on March 21. Concerts, exhibitions, and fairs are organized in parks and squares. Performances by tight-rope walkers and maskharabozes (traditional comedians/clowns), sports competitions, and national dances create an atmosphere of joy and merriment. Creative groups and cultural centers performances showcasing the richness of Uzbekistan's multicultural heritage are especially popular. It is important to note that this is a time when people not only celebrate but also reflect on spiritual values such as caring for nature, helping those in need, forgiving grievances, and doing good deeds. In 2009, UNESCO included Navruz in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, emphasizing its unique significance for the entire world.

Navruz connects the past and the present, nature and culture, people and their traditions. If you find yourself in Uzbekistan during the days of celebration, you will undoubtedly feel the magic of this extraordinary time, filled with warmth, joy, and hospitality.



# THROUGH the AGES



HOW THE TRADITIONS OF AUTHENTIC  
UZBEK WEDDINGS HAVE BEEN PRESERVED

**U**zbek wedding traditions go down deep into history. Just as ancestors honored traditions of hospitality and family values, modern generations strive to uphold these customs. A wedding has always been more than just the union of two hearts; it is a significant event for the entire family. Today, many ancient customs have been preserved, and enriched by modern elements. Colorful bright outfits, lavish feasts, and ancient rituals create an atmosphere of magic and mystery, which we will now explore further.

## ENGAGEMENT AND PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION

The preparations and associated rituals begin as early as the initial meeting of the prospective bride and groom. If the matchmaking is successful and the couple likes each other, the rite of "non sindirish" is held – the elders of both families break a flat bread in half as a symbol of the union of two families.

The main rite preceding the wedding is the "fatiha-tui", or engagement ceremony. This usually takes place a month before the wedding at the bride's home, where her parents are presented with the kalym – a symbolic "bride price" in a beautifully crafted wooden box. The groom's senior relative hands over the kalym, along with the money the bride's family is presented with dozens of boxes containing halva, flatbreads with sesame seeds sprinkled on top, sweets, and fabrics.

On the eve of the wedding, a bridal shower/bachelorette party, "kizlar bazmi", is held at the bride's home. Friends, sisters, and young neighbors gather to bid farewell to the bride's single life, enjoying food and preparing the bride's makeup. In the old days, the "kizlar bazmi" included a now nearly extinct rite involving a weeper at the bridal shower. She would help the bride say goodbye to her youth and freedom, and it was believed that the louder and longer the bride wept, the easier and happier her married life would be.

## WEDDING AND THE FOLLOWING DAYS

The wedding ("nikah-tui") lasts three days: on the first day, "maslahat oshi" takes place—a gathering of the elders of both families, where the details of the celebration are discussed over a meal of pilaf; on the second day, the wedding ceremony is held; and on the third day, "shukrona osh," a kind of thanksgiving dinner, is organized. In some regions of Uzbekistan, all events are held on specific days of the week: on Friday—the engagement, on Saturday—preparations for the wedding, and on Sunday—the nikah (wedding ceremony). A wedding during Navruz holds special significance, as Navruz itself marks the beginning of a new annual cycle, making it symbolic to congratulate the newlyweds on the start of their new life during this period.

On the wedding day, the groom and his guests arrive at the bride's house closer to lunchtime. He is guided to the house along a symbolic white carpet called the "poy-andoz". At the entrance, the groom faces a wall tent, part of which he must tear apart before entering. After this, the groom and his guests are treated to a meal of "kuyov oshi" (groom's pilaf). According to one regional tradition, the groom leaves a full handprint on the pilaf, and chocolate is placed where his fingers have left their mark, and the pilaf is then taken to the bride, thus wishing the young couple a sweet married life.



During or after the meal, the bride's aunts and grandmothers bring a tray of gifts for the groom, known as "kuyov sarpo". This tray typically contains a chapan (traditional robe), a skullcap, and a waist scarf. One of the groom's close friends turns him toward Mecca and helps him put on the chapan (traditional robe). The empty tray is then passed around the groom's friends, who place their gifts on it before returning it to the bride's relatives.

Depending on the region and adherence to traditions, customs that have survived since the time of Zoroastrianism were also practiced. For example, to ward off the evil eye, newlyweds were led around a fire several times, and later, when they needed to enter the house, a veil/cover was held over them. We asked Umida Akhmedova, the author of the film "Men and women: rites and ritual", about this fascinating tradition.

— *How do people perceive the traditions associated with Zoroastrianism, such as walking around the fire? How they are connected to our people?*

— People don't consciously recognize and associate them with Zoroastrianism; it's just how things have always been done. Elements of fire worship in Central Asia (and perhaps elsewhere—similar practices exist in the Caucasus and Iran) have been preserved not only in wedding ceremonies. In northern Uzbekistan, in Khorezm, lamps with fire are placed in niches at holy Muslim sites, and people clearly don't think of Zoroastrianism. I've seen elements of fire worship among Catholics and Armenians too. On holidays, they jump over fires, and Russians burn effigies of winter.

Azerbaijanis also jump over fires during Navruz, showing that these fire-related rites have largely been preserved. However, lately, I've observed fire gradually disappearing from rites, as some people feel it doesn't align with Islamic customs.

There are also traditions in which the entire mahalla (neighborhood) participated: "korpa kavish"—the sewing and quilting of cotton blankets and kurpacha (mattresses) for the young couple; "sabzi tugrар"—the chopping of carrots for the wedding pilaf; and "mol yoyar"—displaying the bride's dowry to show it to all relatives and neighbors.

— *Toward the end of your film, there's a scene where the bride and groom lie under a blanket, then a mirror is brought to them, and they are fumigated. What does this tradition signify, and how common is it?*

— Unfortunately, few places have preserved these magical rites. Many have been abolished under claims of inconsistency with Islamic traditions. This is a real challenge that hinders the study of history, ethnography, oral folk art, costumes, and so on.

The tradition of showing the bride and groom their reflection goes far deeper into the past. Perhaps this is because in the past the bride and groom might not have seen each other before the wedding. Various games were created for the newly-weds who had never been close to one another. Some of these games were performed by women in a theatrical form. It is likely that all of this has some magical significance, the keys to which have been lost, but people continue to follow the traditions because it is customary.



This scene was filmed almost 20 years ago in Khorezm, and the custom of presenting a mirror to the newlyweds and letting a child pass between them is now rarely practiced.

We decided to ask local residents to learn more about wedding rituals in Khorezm:

**Bekposha Toirova:** "I haven't heard of the mirror tradition, but there is a rite where the bride and groom are placed under a blanket, and a child is allowed to pass between them. The child must be alone, between 1 and 5 years old – no older. The child must go under the blanket from the side of the newlyweds' feet and come out from the side of their heads. This is how they wish the couple to have many children".

**Kamila Ibragimova:** "The first step in creating a new family unit is the "fatiha", or engagement ceremony. This signifies that both sides agree to the wedding.

Housing is provided by the groom's side, and shortly before the wedding, the bride's side visits the home where the young couple will live to understand the layout of the rooms and their sizes. The bride's side typically provides the dowry, which is known as "uy kurar".

A few days before the wedding, several people, mainly women from the bride's side, arrive at the groom's house to furnish the couple's room with new furniture and prepare everything for the newlyweds.



On the early morning of the wedding day, the bride's side treats everyone to pilaf. On average, around 300 people or more attend this event, and it is exclusively for men.

When the groom arrives to pick up the bride, a table is set up for him and his friends, and pilaf must be served on the table. The groom feeds his unmarried friends and brothers as a gesture to encourage them to marry soon. In the evening, the wedding celebration takes place with guests, songs, and dances.

There are also some unwritten traditions: before the event begins, elder women bless the groom, and young children are placed on his lap so that the couple may soon have children of their own. If a girl is placed, their first child is believed to be a girl; if a boy, the firstborn will be a boy.



Then the groom goes to fetch the bride, who is sitting in the car waiting for her entrance. There is an interesting tradition associated with this moment: as the bride sets her foot on the ground, the groom must step on it at that moment. This signifies that the man is the head of the household".

After the ceremony, the women sing the traditional wedding song "Yor-Yor", and everyone heads to the groom's house to celebrate the formation of the new family, known as the "to'y bazm".

In the groom's house, a room is prepared for the bride – the "chimildiq". It is an essential part of the room, with heavy curtains on all the windows decorated with beads and sequins/embroidery. The bride's dowry and personal belongings are also placed there.

On the third day, the "kelin salom" ("the bride's greetings") ceremony takes place – the greeting of the bride in her new home. An important part of this tradition is the flatbread, from which the bride must take the first bite, followed by her mother-in-law. This symbolizes a harmonious shared life and abundance in the household.

By the way, Umida Akhmedova calls "Yor-Yor" her favorite ceremonial song. "There is such a wedding song: a girl is guided to her groom when she leaves her father's house. It has very touching music". You can listen to it here:



After that, the mother-in-law gives the bride gold jewelry, and each relative on the groom's side follows suit. *Kelin* (Editor's note: this is how the husband's relatives call the new bride who has joined their family), in turn, stands under a scarf and bows to each family member in gratitude.

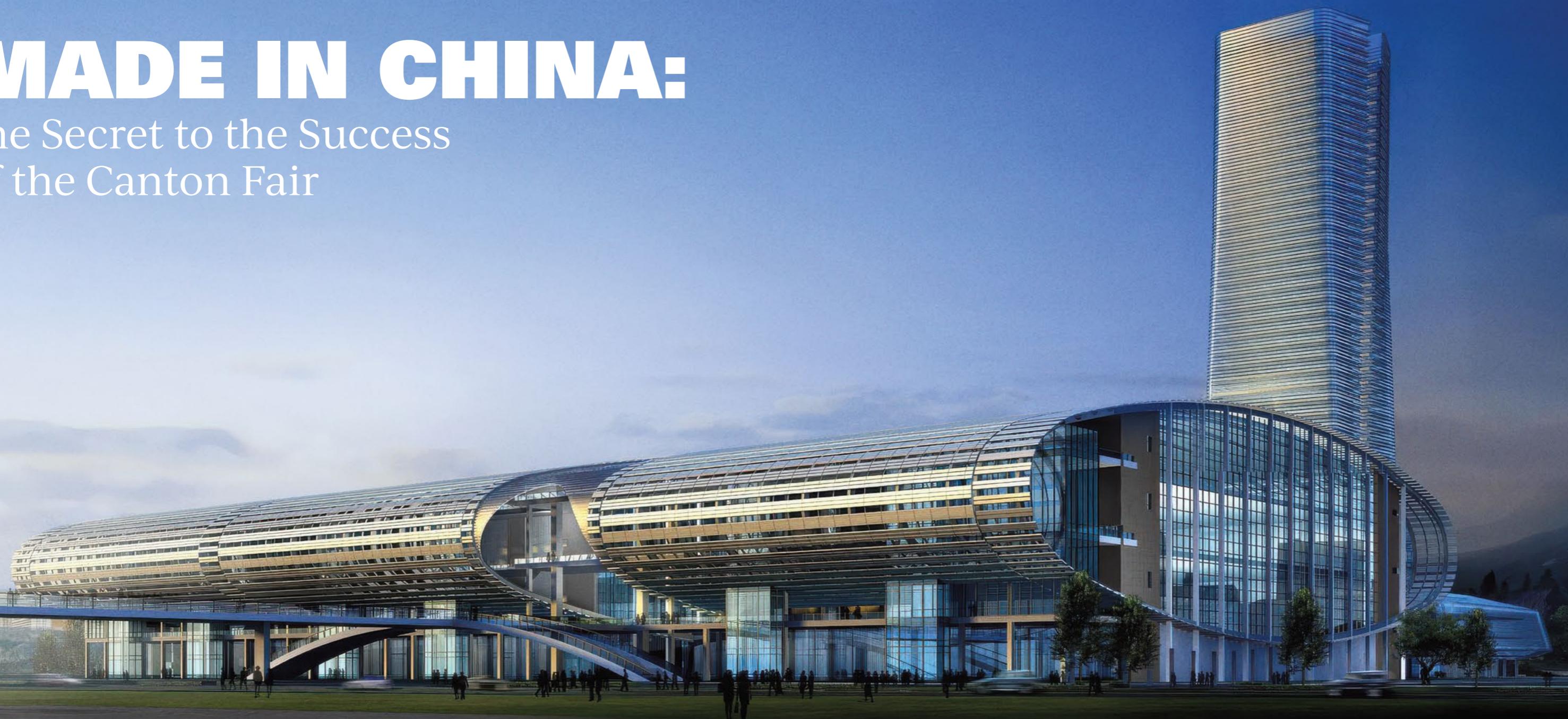
There are also traditions regarding the wedding attire for the couple. For the wedding ceremony, men wear a "kuylak" – a straight-cut shirt, "ishton" – wide trousers, and a "chapan" – a quilted robe with side slits, which is tied with a belt. The belt is often adorned or embroidered with silver, and the groom must wear a "tubeteika" (skullcap) on his head. The bride's wedding outfit consists of a simple cut dress made of "khan-atlas" fabric and loose pants/bloomers. The headwear for women is a bit more complex and consists of three parts: a small hat, a scarf, and a turban.

These traditions, rituals, and ceremonies, some of which have been preserved in their original form to this day, make Uzbek weddings so unique. The harmonious blend of ancient customs and modern trends is a living testament to the rich history and culture of the people. It is not just a celebration but a journey into a world of traditions where the past harmoniously intertwines with the present.

IF YOU DREAM OF A ROMANTIC GETAWAY AFTER YOUR WEDDING, CENTRUM AIR WILL MAKE IT A REALITY. DISCOVER ANTALYA, ISTANBUL, TBILISI, BATUMI, DUBAI, OR SEOUL – PERFECT DESTINATIONS FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE HONEYMOON.

# MADE IN CHINA:

## The Secret to the Success of the Canton Fair



**T**o remain a leader for decades – A challenge that only a few can take on. The Canton Fair is not only the world's premier trade fair, it also sets the pace for global business. It is China's largest venue, where new markets are born, strategic deals are made, and trends that influence the global economy are shaped. Guangzhou Inbound Tourism Director Xi Xinxing helps us understand the fair's phenomenon and why entrepreneurs from all over the world come here again and again.

**Xi Xinxing**  
Guangzhou Inbound Tourism Director

### Uniqueness

Among the many trade fairs, the Canton Fair occupies a special place. It is not just China's largest business platform, but a strategic hub of global trade, where East and West, tradition and technology, ambition and opportunity meet. For 60 years, the fair has maintained its status as a leading centre for international cooperation, offering a unique combination of scale, scope and flexibility. It brings together more than 25,000 exhibitors from a wide range of industries: from advanced electronics and industrial equipment to textiles, fashion, food and automotive technology. This makes it a universal platform for businesses of any kind.



Today, the Canton Fair shapes the future of global trade. Every year, innovative technologies are presented here, new models of interaction between suppliers and buyers are tested, and digital tools are introduced to make the negotiation process even more convenient and efficient. An additional advantage is the personalized approach – the organizers help foreign companies find suitable partners, organize meetings and conduct negotiations in comfortable conditions.

The geographical factor also plays a key role, as Guangzhou is the largest trade center in southern China, with developed infrastructure, convenient location and advantageous logistics. Proximity to China's leading manufacturing clusters provides quick access to factories and suppliers, making the Canton Fair especially attractive to wholesale buyers.

**Unlike exhibitions that focus on one industry, the Canton Fair brings together thousands of companies from different sectors, creating a one-stop platform for buyers from all over the world.**

### The main goal

This exhibition has long outgrown the format of a regular trade fair, becoming a strategic platform for the development of international business. The main goal is to create conditions for effective interaction between suppliers and buyers, stimulate exports and develop new markets. Participants and organizers strive not only to show goods, but to create an environment in which entrepreneurs can find new opportunities, expand partnerships and integrate into international trade processes.

The most important aspect of the event is the focus on the negotiation process and the conclusion of long-term contracts. Here, business meetings are held not only at stands, but also within the framework of closed business forums, where investment projects, joint productions and strategic alliances are discussed. Finally, the Canton Fair is a mirror of the global economy, reflecting current trends and changing market needs.

### Digitalization and hybrid solutions

In recent years, the exhibition has undergone a major transformation, adapting to new economic realities and technological challenges. One of the main steps was the introduction of a hybrid format, which combined classic offline exhibitions with advanced digital tools.

The shift to an online platform began in 2020, when the pandemic forced a rethink of the traditional event format. Virtual exhibition stands, video presentations, and automated systems for finding partners made participation available to even more companies. Now business negotiations can be held remotely, and product demonstrations can be conducted in real time through interactive platforms.



Artificial intelligence for selecting business contacts, integration with international logistics platforms, digital product catalogs and other modern solutions make participation in the exhibition even more convenient and productive, and the hybrid format has turned it into a year-round business ecosystem, available 24/7.

### Historical Milestones and Development

The fair has evolved from a small national trading platform to the largest global business forum. Its history is closely linked to China's economic development and its integration into global trade.

Since its foundation in 1957, the event was conceived as a tool for strengthening the country's export potential. In the first decades, its participants were exclusively Chinese companies focused on foreign markets, but after the economic reforms of 1978 and the start of the "open door" policy, the geography of participants began to expand.

2007 was a landmark year – for the first time, foreign companies presented their products at the exhibition, which brought it to a new level of international interaction. Since then, the format has continued to evolve, integrating innovative technologies and attracting more and more exhibitors from all over the world.

Today, the venue covers 1.1 million square meters and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors from 220+ countries, remaining the largest trade fair in the world. Its ability to adapt to the challenges of the time confirms its leadership status and strategic importance for the global market.

**The Canton Fair aims to not only connect buyers and sellers, but to do so in such a way that everyone finds a reliable partner and feels confident in every transaction. After all, business is, first and foremost, about people.**



### How the Fair Changed Guangzhou

Over the \$decades of its existence, the fair has transformed Guangzhou from a regional trade center into one of the world's major business hubs. The city, located in the heart of the dynamically developing Guangdong province, has become a symbol of China's openness and its integration into the global economy.

With the regular influx of thousands of international entrepreneurs, Guangzhou saw rapid development of its infrastructure, with modern exhibition complexes, business centers, hotels, and logistics terminals being built. The emergence of the Pazhou Exhibition Complex, the largest in Asia, was a clear indication of this growth.

The economic impact of the expo extends far beyond the fair itself. With each new season, the volume of foreign direct investment increases, and new jobs are created in trade, transport, hospitality and finance. The development of high-speed rail and the expansion of Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport have made the city even more accessible to foreign partners.

**The fair has transformed Guangzhou into a global trade center. The event attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, stimulating the development of hotels, business centers, and international services that support trade.**

### Interaction of traditions and technologies

The Canton Fair is a unique combination of long-standing traditions and modern solutions. Despite the rapid development of digital technologies, personal meetings, live communication with suppliers and product testing still play a key role. Many contracts are concluded after individual negotiations, where the nuances of cooperation and trust between partners are important.

At the same time, digitalization makes the process even more convenient: B2B platforms, video communication and online trading tools allow you to find profitable offers and conclude deals faster. This balance of the classic approach and innovation makes the fair indispensable for business.

One of the main events remains the grand opening ceremony – a large-scale event that brings together world business leaders and industry experts. Informal meetings also play an important role, and the cultural program creates an additional atmosphere for productive communication.

Another important aspect is price flexibility. Many suppliers, like the traders of the Great Silk Road, are ready to discuss individual conditions and discounts depending on the volume of purchases, which makes participation in the fair even more profitable.

#### Main industries and products

This exhibition is a real parade of technology, style and innovation. Leading global brands present advanced developments in electronics and household appliances, striking with new products and smart solutions. Industrial equipment – from high-precision machines to key components – opens up new horizons for business. Clothing and textiles delight with their diversity: from trendy everyday fashion to premium collections. Luxurious interiors? Easy! Furniture and decor for home and office inspire with stylish solutions. Automotive technologies are also in the spotlight – the best spare parts and innovations attract industry leaders. And in the gastronomic sector, the emphasis is on fresh farm products and revolutionary ideas in agribusiness. Believe me, there is everything here that makes life more convenient, beautiful and technologically advanced.

#### How exhibitors are selected

To become a participant in the exhibition, companies must meet a number of strict criteria. An important role is played by experience in the international market and business reputation, confirming the stability of the business and its readiness to cooperate with foreign partners. High quality products and the presence of international certificates are mandatory conditions for admission to the exposition, since the organizers strive to maintain a high level of the goods presented. In addition, the company's ability to offer competitive conditions and a wide range of products is considered, which makes it attractive to potential buyers.

The selection process is very careful to ensure that each company represented meets the established standards and that the fair itself remains an effective platform for concluding transactions. If your company is ready to become part of this international business community, you can apply on the official Canton Fair website.

#### Popular events

The exhibition includes not only a product demonstration, but also a rich business program, which includes forums, panel discussions and specialized events. The business community actively discusses global trade trends, shares forecasts and development strategies. An important part is the presentations, allowing participants to see new products "live" and test innovative solutions. A special place is occupied by closed negotiation sessions focused on discussing partnership conditions and concluding contracts in the B2B format. Thanks to such events, the exhibition turns into an effective tool for finding new partners and expanding business ties.

The fair will feature workshops and discussion panels to help participants adapt to the new realities of global trade, understand changes in supply chains and master modern digital business tools.

#### Government support

The exhibition is actively supported by the Chinese government, which makes it even more significant on the international stage. The Chinese authorities simplify visa procedures for foreign participants, provide subsidies to Chinese exhibitors, facilitating their entry into the global market, and develop international cooperation programs. Customs procedures for product samples have also been simplified, which allows for faster demonstration of goods and conclusion of transactions. This level of government support turns the event into a strategic tool for the development of the national economy and international partnership.

#### Geography of participants

The Canton Fair annually attracts participants from all over the world, demonstrating its global significance. Participating countries include China, Turkey, Germany, Korea, Taiwan, Pakistan, Panama, Uzbekistan, Israel, Egypt, the United States, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Thailand, Italy, Spain, Vietnam, Iran, Sri Lanka, Portugal and Russia. Such diversity confirms the Canton Fair's status as the largest international trade platform.

#### Guests

The Canton Fair brings together business representatives and investors from more than 220 countries. The leading guests traditionally remain companies from the USA and Europe, which actively purchase electronics, equipment, clothing and furniture. Southeast Asia focuses on textile and agricultural products, and the countries of the Middle East and Africa are interested in auto parts and food products. Latin America actively cooperates with Chinese manufacturers in the field of agricultural machinery and consumer goods. The wide coverage of countries makes the exhibition one of the most universal trade platforms in the world.

#### Challenges and Prospects

Despite its status as a leading trading platform, the fair faces a number of challenges. Economic instability affects investment activity, and disruptions in supply chains can slow down the execution of contracts. Competition from digital trading platforms forces organizers to look for new formats of interaction, adapt the business program and expand opportunities for online participation. However, the introduction of innovations, the development of hybrid formats and the strengthening of international cooperation allow the exhibition not only to maintain its leadership, but also to set new trends in global trade.



#### Success story

Throughout its history, the fair has been the hub of many major deals and strategic partnerships. One of the most famous cases was when a Brazilian businessman bought a Chinese factory's entire annual production in one day. A French chain of stores placed an order for 500,000 exclusive plush toys that had never been produced before, and an American electronics distributor signed a contract to supply innovative kitchen gadgets. These examples confirm that participation in the fair opens up huge opportunities for growth and international expansion. The Canton Fair sets trends, creates new business connections and creates conditions for sustainable economic growth, and its ability to adapt to global challenges, introduce innovations and expand international cooperation makes it a key event in the field of world trade.

**Major companies, including Gree Electric Appliances, Huawei, TCL and Midea, have been participating in the exhibition for many years, building long-term partnerships and strengthening their positions in the global market.**

*This spring, the Canton Fair will be held from April 15 to May 5, and we, in turn, have taken care of your comfortable travel: Centrum Air has launched direct flights to Guangzhou, which are operated three times a week. Plan your trip in advance, discover new horizons and be at the center of global trends with Centrum Air!*

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**I**n Uzbekistan, traditions are cherished and upheld, which is reflected in all spheres of art and culture. Since its founding in 2007, the musical band Jazzirama has breathed new life into Uzbek jazz by blending ethnic motifs with a modern sound. This unique project, uniting talented musicians who are deeply passionate about their work, seamlessly blends the country's rich cultural heritage with an innovative approach to jazz, making their music distinctive. In an interview, saxophonist, composer, producer, educator, and band leader Saidmurat Muratov shared insights into the creative journey of the band, their views on the development of jazz in Uzbekistan, and how they merge contemporary trends with the rich musical heritage of their homeland.

— HOW DID JAZZIRAMA COME INTO BEING?

— Jazzirama was born out of a long creative journey and serendipitous encounters. While studying at the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan, I met pianist and composer Sanjar Nafikov during concert rehearsals. Our joint performances and shared passion for jazz led us to a decision to work together. In 2007, we launched our first project, called Jam Five, consisting of five conservatory students. With this lineup, we gave our first solo concert at the Mark Weil Ilkhom Theater. Then we organized various interesting concerts and small projects. The name of our band changed over time, just as did the musicians who played with us.

At first, we performed American jazz, but by our second concert, we realized that merely imitating Western music wasn't entirely our path, we began searching for our own style. We grew up in Uzbekistan, a country with incredibly rich traditions. Why should we engage in imitation? Of course, we should learn from the masters, and there is much to take from foreign musicians in terms of professionalism, punctuality, time management, soundcheck nuances... Musically, there is also much to learn, but one day, while listening to Azerbaijani pianist Vagif Mustafazadeh, who masterfully combined jazz with mugham, I thought: why don't we try doing the same with Uzbek music? That's how we started experimenting. At our second concert, when we were still called "Quartet S.M.", we performed the aria "Otmagay tong" from the Uzbek opera "Takhir and Zukhra". To perform this piece, I specifically prepared with the renowned Uzbek musician Batyr Dusumbetov, who taught me to play the nay (a traditional Uzbek flute). The response was overwhelming, and we realized we had chosen the right direction.

After that, we began composing our own pieces based on Uzbek music, and by 2013, under the name Jazzirama, we started actively developing this style. The name came from a project headed by Mansur Ganiyevich Tashmatov, in which I had previously participated. He believed that Jazzirama perfectly captured the spirit of jazz, and Sanjar and I decided to continue our creative journey under this name with his approval.

— WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DID THE BAND MEMBERS PLAY BEFORE JOINING THE GROUP?

— Before coming together as a single band, each of us already had a certain level of experience in music. I have always loved playing pop music, jazz, and, of course, classical pieces, which greatly contribute to musical development. Sanjar, on the other hand, has been a rock musician his whole life, but over time, his creative path led him to jazz, and it was during this period that we met.

Besides us, our band includes another unique musician—Shavkat Matyakubov, a maqomist (maqom performer) and multi-instrumentalist who serves as an associate professor at the Uzbek National Institute of Musical Arts named after Yunus Rajabi. Shavkat plays the tanbur, sato, doira, surnay, and koshnay. He is a true one-man band, and his uniqueness lies in the fact that he is not only a maqom singer but also one of the few musicians who promotes Uzbek performing arts worldwide. Shavkat has traveled to more than 40 countries, performing maqoms, and even participated in a project with the world-renowned Dutch band/ensemble Atlas Orchestra, where he was invited without an audition to share the stage with them. He is more than just a performer – he shares his deep knowledge of maqom with us, acting as both a mentor and a guide into the world of Uzbek musical traditions.

As for the decision to play jazz with an Uzbek flavor, it felt natural for each of us. We have always understood that jazz is not just a genre/style but an entire culture that embodies freedom and democracy. Jazz was originated in an era of slavery and racial discrimination, and this spirit of freedom remains an integral part of it. Today, this musical style unites nations/people and helps build cultural bridges. For many years, Tashkent has hosted a jazz festival that attracts world-class stars and collects full concert halls, proving the growing interest in jazz in Uzbekistan.



Youtube: Jazzirama&Yogev Shetrit – Otmagay tong

**— HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO FIND THE RIGHT MUSICIANS TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED SOUND?**

— The "desired sound" is an ongoing process, and in essence, we are always in search of it. Even now, we are looking for interesting combinations of instruments and new ideas and forms. We can't say that we have already found the perfect style, that it is finalized and complete. There is always room for improvement, and that is what inspires us to keep experimenting. For example, Azerbaijani musicians, who started experimenting back in the 1960s, continue to search for new paths to this day, combining instruments and styles from different eras. We focus on their experience for inspiration and strive to create something unique.

However, in Uzbekistan, the jazz culture is not well developed, which poses a certain challenge for us. We don't have a jazz faculty in our music schools, and interest from listeners has only recently begun to grow. More people are now attending jazz festivals and concerts in Tashkent, but there is still a shortage of musicians with the necessary skills and experience. For example, Mansur Ganiyevich Tashmatov organizes concerts with an orchestra, gradually fostering interest in ethno-jazz, but the culture is still in its early stages of development.

During a cultural exchange program at the University of Michigan, I shared sheet music and recordings from our first album with local musicians. They instantly understood our music and were ready to play with us. That deeply impressed me: they effortlessly interpreted our compositions even without knowing the intricacies of Uzbek traditional music. Later, while performing in Paris with pianist and professor of the Paris Conservatory Pierre de Bethmann, I once again felt how quickly musicians from different cultural backgrounds grasp and adapt to ethno-jazz. We played "Lazgi" and "Otmagay tong", and I realized that even if musicians are unfamiliar with Uzbek culture, they can still easily convey the spirit of our music. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a jazz culture in Uzbekistan, it is difficult for local musicians to quickly master such pieces. Mostly, they play pop and rock music.

In 2024, we began collaborating with Olimjon Hakimov – a professional in the art of playing percussion instruments/drumming, known for his achievements in Uzbek and Latin American percussion. We performed together at several jazz festivals in Europe, and his joining the group was a significant event for us. Olimjon is a truly creative artist with his own projects, so he isn't always available to play with us, but whenever he has time, he joins us because he is genuinely interested in ethno-jazz. His presence has added power and dynamism to our sound, and his energy and talent constantly inspire us to explore new musical frontiers.

**— WHAT MAKES UZBEK ETHNO-JAZZ SO APPEALING?**

— First and foremost, Uzbek ethnic music is our native sound. Since childhood, we've listened to the sounds of the nay, dutar, and maqom performances on the radio. Unfortunately, many don't understand its depth, but in reality, it is sublime and spiritual, as maqom is built on the poetry of great poets. We collaborate with the Honored Artist of Uzbekistan, maqom performer Nodira Pirmatova, and I have repeatedly witnessed her playing the dutar. Tears would well up in the eyes – it's music that touches the soul. Jazzirama is not the kind of project where boundaries define our actions. We chose this path because we truly love it all. It can be seen as a way of expressing gratitude to our homeland, where great figures like Al-Khwarizmi, Avicenna, and Al-Bukhari once lived and created. This is a global cultural center, and we must not forget its greatness. Uzbekistan is a place where life and creativity have always flourished, yet unfortunately, many people today underestimate its rich cultural treasures. For example, what some might call "a stick and two strings" is, in fact, a unique feature. The tanbur in the hands of masters like Turgun Alimatov becomes an instrument capable of conveying deep emotions and music that has lived for centuries. It is truly wonderful when people start showing interest in this music and recognizing its value. But most importantly, we do this because it is part of us, it runs through our veins.

The choice of a piece to play is always connected to what we listen to and what inspires us. Sometimes, it's old pop or folk recordings. Other times, I discover something interesting on vinyl records. For example, once I came across "Lazgi" performed by Nasiba Abdullayeva. I really liked how she interpreted the composition, giving it a pop sound while keeping its national essence/style. It was a true fusion of the 1980s. Imagine this: the music starts, the vocals come in, and at some point, an electric guitar joins in, and its sound resembles the Khorezm accordion. That left a strong impression on us, and we decided to use that idea as the basis for our own version of "Lazgi". Some compositions we heard for the first time in pop performance. For example, the song "Sumbula" performed by Rayhon Ganieva. I immediately thought that this piece was worth working on.

Sometimes one of us composes music at home on a computer, and then during rehearsals, we decide how to develop the composition and what to do with it next. It's always a process of discovery, and with each new experiment, we uncover something unique for our band.



Youtube:  
*Jazzirama&Yogev Shetrit – Lazgi*





— WHICH FAMOUS MUSICIANS HAVE YOU PERFORMED WITH ON THE SAME STAGE?

— One of our first collaborations happened at the Spring Jazz Festival in 2014. At that time, UNESCO was actively involving embassies of various countries to provide funding to bring artists at their expense. Thanks to this, we got the opportunity to play with American musicians, and among our first colleagues was the Ari Roland Jazz Quartet.

However, if we talk about more significant collaborations in Uzbek jazz, the most notable example would probably be our work with Pierre de Bethmann, a pianist and professor at the Paris Conservatory. In 2016, we had the honor of performing with him at a solo concert. Another notable collaboration was with Hervé Sellin, a professor at the Jazz and Improvised Music department at the Paris National Conservatory of Music and Dance, with whom we performed at his concert in Tashkent. This was a truly important moment for us, as Hervé Sellin is one of the leading figures in French jazz.

We have also performed several times with Canadian pianist David Braid at concerts at the Ilkhom Theater, at the Tashkent Jazz Festival, and in 2022, we had an amazing experience performing on the same stage with the "Turkiston" Chamber Orchestra.



Youtube:  
Jazzirama&Yogev Sherit - O'zbekiston



Speaking of our plans for the future, we would very much like to collaborate with the State Symphony Orchestra of Uzbekistan under the direction of Kamoliddin Urinbaev and with the National Symphony Orchestra of Uzbekistan chaired by Alibek Kabdurakhmanov. We believe that working with these outstanding orchestras could lead to something truly fascinating and unique. We would also like to work with tanbur player Toir Askar, maqom performers Mohichehra Shomurotova and Munojat Yulchieva. One of our guiding stars is Sevara Nazarkhan, who has made her way onto the global stage, performing Uzbek pieces around the globe. And of course, we would love to create something unique with many other talented musicians as well.

— IN WHICH INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS AND FESTIVALS HAS JAZZIRAMA PARTICIPATED?

— We have participated in several international competitions and festivals. One of the first was the Bishkek Jazz Festival in 2009, where we won the Grand Prix for performing the ethno-jazz composition "Sary-Oy". In 2024, we received the "Future of Jazz" award at the St. Petersburg International Jazz Festival, which became a significant milestone for our group.

There aren't many jazz competitions, and most of them are aimed at solo performers. For example, the Montreux Jazz Piano Competition for pianists and the Michael Brecker Competition for saxophonists. Sometimes, festival organizers add a competitive element by awarding prizes to inspire participants.

Editor's note: By the way, if you dream of visiting international music festivals and immersing yourself in the atmosphere of live performances, Centrum Air will make your journey comfortable and seamless!

**— WHAT MUSICAL PROJECTS HAVE YOU WORKED ON?**

— One of the first projects I was involved in was the Ilkhom Jazz Club. This was my personal project, which still exists today, although it is currently on hold. The club was actively running from 2014 to 2018, hosting more than 30 concerts with local performers and nearly 50 masterclasses featuring guest musicians from abroad. Our idea was to create a kind of creative sandbox, and to some extent, we succeeded—the club gained recognition, and musicians from different countries started reaching out to us with performance proposals. However, we had to honestly explain that we didn't have the funding to invite them. We received support from embassies and organizations like UNESCO, but we didn't have our own funds.

The next project was "Jazz Umidlari" (Jazz Hopes), which ran from 2019 to 2021 in collaboration with the creative workshop "Ariya" under the direction of Valentina Martirosyan. It served as a creative platform for children and teenagers passionate about jazz. For example, one of the participants was Madinabonu Odilova, who became a semifinalist on the show "Ovoz: The Voice of Uzbekistan", and with whom we continue to work. I have also taken part in educational projects supported by the U.S. Embassy. After traveling to the United States through a government program, I became an alumni, which opened up new opportunities. The embassy invites alumni to various events and offers the chance to apply for grants, which allowed us to win grants twice for the projects "Self-Expression Through Jazz Improvisation" and "Jazz as a Driver of Democratic Reforms". In addition, we conduct masterclasses at major music in-

stitutions in Tashkent, including: The Uspensky Music School, The Glière Music School, The College of Variety and Circus Arts, The State Conservatory of Uzbekistan

**— WHAT SPECIAL PROJECTS SHOULD WE EXPECT?**

— We are planning to launch new educational programs for musicians, including the revival of the "Jazz Umidlari" (Jazz Hopes) project and the relaunch of Ilkhom Jazz Club. However, much depends on funding.

There is government support, but it is insufficient for large-scale initiatives. We have to be enthusiasts, constantly looking for sponsors, writing letters, and making calls to attract and secure the necessary funds. When planning projects, we rely on our own resources. We need to build a financial base that will allow us to organize events using our own funds, so as not to depend on external assistance.

Despite these challenges, we have already received support. For example, the Fund for the Development of Culture and Arts covered our trips to The St. Petersburg International Jazz Festival and The Venice Art Biennale, where we twice represented Uzbek jazz. Such moments inspire us, but they are not enough to resolve key issues. For example, Uzbekistan does not have a jazz faculty, and establishing one would significantly improve the level of jazz performance. We discussed this issue with the U.S. Embassy, and they proposed a program that would allow us to invite a professor from the United States to lay the foundation for jazz education. This would be a crucial step in addressing this issue.





At present, funding is often allocated toward bringing in world-renowned stars. This is important for audiences, but such projects lack an educational component. Masterclasses are inspiring, but they do not provide in-depth knowledge. To achieve sustainable long-term results, we need regular programs, such as one-year courses, where young musicians can study jazz disciplines in-depth.

We have already received approval from the Fund for the Development of Culture and Arts to create an educational jazz program. Our current task is to properly outline the project and work through all the details such as the number of teachers, class schedules, and salary rates. The success of the program depends on having the right structure. We need to consider everything carefully to avoid mistakes at the start.

The problem we face is evident: after major jazz festivals, young musicians feel inspired but encounter the reality that there are no specialists in institutes and music schools for teaching jazz at a high level. While pop music education in Uzbekistan is good, jazz requires a different, more specialized approach. It must be admitted that even teachers do not always know where to acquire the required knowledge in this field.

If we launch a program that helps young musicians deepen their jazz knowledge, we can bridge this gap. Regular classes on improvisation, harmony, jazz theory, and ensemble performance will give talented musicians ready to learn a real chance to grow and develop their skills.

We also plan to study the experiences of our colleagues in other countries to better understand how their programs are structured: which courses are in demand, which approaches are most effective. This will help us create a well-designed, functional and efficient model.

At this stage, we are working on the project to make it as well-thought-out and professional as possible. We don't just want to launch an educational program but aim to create a platform for the long-term development of jazz in Uzbekistan. With the right approach and support, this initiative could radically change the situation, give a boost to new talents, bring Uzbek jazz to a global level. Give us a little time, and we will definitely turn this idea into reality. After all, when enthusiasm meets support, truly significant things are created.

#### — ON WHICH MUSIC PLATFORMS CAN YOU BE FOUND?

— Currently, we are not on music platforms, but we plan to upload our tracks to Spotify, Yandex Music, YouTube, and others. Ten years ago, we released an album, and we will definitely make it available online. Over the years, we have accumulated a lot of new material, which, for now, we only perform at concerts. Our goal is to record and release albums. In addition, we have unique compositions with a symphony orchestra, which we also want to record and share with our audience.

#### — WHAT ARE YOUR UPCOMING CREATIVE PLANS?

— We are preparing to participate in the Baku Jazz Festival this fall. We were supposed to be invited last year, but there was a mix-up that the organizers confused the format and scheduled us to perform ethnic hip-hop, although we had planned to perform jazz with Uzbek motifs at the Mugham Center. It was decided to postpone our performance to the following year, and now we are confident that everything will go as planned. Honestly, this incident only fueled our desire to make the performance even more vibrant and memorable, showcasing the unique blend of jazz and Uzbek music. Also, last summer, prominent musician and producer Anvar Kalandarov contacted us. He expressed a desire to release our first album on vinyl in Europe and the U.S. and support its promotion on the international market. So, I think our first vinyl records will be available for purchase next year.

#### — HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT TRYING A DIFFERENT MUSICAL GENRE/DIRECTION?

— We stopped considering ourselves solely jazz musicians a long time ago. We use that name for simplicity, but in reality, we are much broader than that—we are simply musicians. Jazz is an amazing genre, but it is not the only way to express oneself. We don't strive to play classic American jazz because that would require fully immersing ourselves in the genre and dedicating ourselves solely to it. However, such an approach would lead to creating a good copy rather than finding our own identity. Copying at the initial stage is fine, but it's important not to get stuck in it and to find something of our own. For that, the right environment is crucial, as musicians can inspire each other and create something unique.

I believe we have found our style by interpreting folk melodies through the lens of ethno-jazz, so for now, we are not considering switching to another style. Instead, we want to delve deeper into what we have already created and develop it further.

#### — WHAT IS JAZZIRAMA'S ULTIMATE DREAM?

— To continue growing and experimenting while staying true to our uniqueness. We prefer playing the instruments we are familiar with because that's where we feel confident. Of course, each of us can play other instruments a little, but our main focus remains on those that have become our signature/hallmark.

At the same time, we are thinking about incorporating new technologies. For example, electronic wind controllers, which can reproduce any sound and offer space for experimentation, are becoming increasingly popular. We are also considering the possibility of creating electronic projects that would incorporate DJ controllers, loopers, beat machines, and other modern devices. This could add a fresh, contemporary touch to our music. We are open to experiments and hope to combine traditional sounds with new technologies, creating something unique and exciting.

#### — IF JAZZ AND UZBEK MUSICAL MOTIFS DIDN'T EXIST, WHAT WOULD JAZZIRAMA PERFORM?

At this moment, the band's co-founder, Sanjar Nafikov, joined the conversation and his remark was incredibly vivid:

*"If jazz and Uzbek musical motifs didn't exist, we would have invented them!"*

Saidmurat added: "Yes, these two cultural elements reflect us so deeply that if one of them were missing, we would surely compensate for it with something of our own. Perhaps we would create a new style based on other ethnic melodies or rhythms, incorporating the emotions and feelings that jazz and national music bring to us. After all, the most important thing for us is the freedom of self-expression and conveying a story through sound".

# EVERY STORY BEGINS WITH A CUP OF TEA



This piece intricately weaves together four countries: China—the birthplace of tea; Nizhny Novgorod, which in the 19th century served as a gateway for tea to Moscow, St. Petersburg, and further into Europe through Russia's largest fair; Uzbekistan, where tea culture is inseparable from the traditional chaykhana; and Georgia, home to some of the world's northernmost tea plantations. We aimed to create a narrative that feels warm and homely, focusing not so much on the history of the beverage itself but on traditions and the cherished memories of those who enjoy it.

"The first cup moistens my lips and throat,  
The second cup shatters my loneliness,  
The third cup probes my barren mind,  
Only to find volumes of wandering thoughts.  
The fourth cup – ah, sweat begins to emerge.  
All that is wrong in life escapes through my pores.  
With the fifth cup, I am cleansed.  
The sixth lifts me to the realm of immortality;  
The seventh... Alas, I can drink no more!"

*Ancient Chinese poet*

## TEA AND PILAF – LIKE LOVERS UNITED IN MARRIAGE

Despite Uzbekistan ranking first among countries that prefer tea over coffee (according to Euromonitor International, 2016), the country has no tea plantations due to its climate, which makes cultivation impossible. The main suppliers are Sri Lanka, China, England, Georgia, and Iran, while major tea-packing factories are located in Tashkent and Samarkand. To explore Uzbek tea traditions, we spoke with Tashkent Khurshid, a renowned Uzbek travel blogger, radio and TV journalist from the channel Dunyo Boylab ("Around the World"), with over 22 years of experience. Khurshid is a true tea connoisseur – he can determine the quality of a tea just by its color and the first sip.

— Due to climatic conditions, green tea is the preferred choice in Uzbekistan. It has a refreshing and invigorating effect, which is especially important in the summer heat. Black tea is also popular, but mainly in the capital, where the weather is cooler. If you order tea in a café, you'll most likely be served a pot of black tea with lemon and sugar, which enhance the flavor. In recent years, I've noticed a growing demand for Chinese oolong, gunpowder tea, and large-leaf varieties, which bloom into a beautiful flower as they steep.

Tea is an essential part of Uzbek life, enjoyed from early morning as a staple of breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and several times throughout the day – especially in summer. The choice of teaware is crucial: a ceramic, sometimes clay, teapot with a rounded shape is preferred. The teapot is rinsed with boiling water before adding tea leaves – usually two portions – to ensure a rich, amber-colored, and aromatic brew. While the tea steeps, the impatient ones perform a ritual of repeatedly pouring the tea into a small bowl and back into the pot. This process takes about 5-10 minutes.

As for the tradition of adding boiling water to the teapot – we never do that. Instead, we finish the tea, discard the leaves, and brew a fresh pot. Repeated dilution with hot water spoils the 'proper' taste and reduces the tea's beneficial properties.

Now, about tea additions: lemon is welcomed, especially in chaykhana during winter. Milk is rarely used – it's not really part of our tradition. In the mountains of Uzbekistan, a variety of herbs grow, which are harvested, dried, and used for herbal infusions. One of the most common is ziziphora (known locally as 'deer grass'), which has a mint-like flavor.



**Tashkent Khurshid**  
travel blogger,  
radio and TV journalist

Tea is typically accompanied by sweets, nuts, dried fruits, or pastries, though I personally don't enjoy these. My perfect pairing? Dark chocolate with orange zest and a hot cup of green tea – definitely worth trying!

— *Kbursbid, could you tell us about the culture of the traditional Uzbek chaykhana?*

— In Uzbekistan, the word chaykhana refers to a place where tea is actually secondary. The real essence of a chaykhana is that, once a week or even once a month, no matter how busy people are, close friends or relatives gather there. The main event is ordering plov, and while waiting for it to be served, everyone drinks tea.

The meal is also finished with tea. In fact, tea and plov are like lovers united in marriage – there is no better combination! Tea helps dissolve fats and aids digestion.

There is an old tradition that dates back centuries. Our elders would serve plov in large, almost flat ceramic dishes called lyagan. After the meal, when only a small amount of oil remained at the bottom, they would pour hot green tea into the dish, and the most respected person at the table would drink this mixture. From a medical standpoint, it may not be considered particularly beneficial, but it was part of the tradition. In some regions, this practice still exists today, just like the custom of eating plov with one's hands.

— *Very interesting! What other tea traditions in Uzbekistan do you know of?*

— There are traditions related to weddings. Before the ceremony, we always have a morning plov, which is traditionally accompanied by tea – both at the beginning and at the end of the meal. When the bride, now officially a wife, enters her husband's home, the household members drink tea from her hands for about a month. She serves it in a special manner, holding the piala (tea bowl) by its base with two fingers.

Another tradition is that tea is always served to guests. In some cultures, coffee might be the main welcoming drink, but in Uzbekistan, it's only green tea – and in large quantities. The first thing brought to a guest is a piala of tea, and only afterward come sweets, food, and everything else. For us, the concepts of hospitality and tea-drinking are simply inseparable.





— I've heard the phrase "Shall I pour you tea with respect?" at an Uzbek table. What does it mean?

— In our culture, it is not customary to fill the piala (tea bowl) to the brim. Doing so can imply that the host does not wish to be asked for more refills. Instead, tea is poured only at the bottom of the bowl, allowing the drinker to take a few sips while the tea is still hot. Then, the guest hands the piala back to the host for another small portion, ensuring that each serving is enjoyed at its optimal temperature and concentration.

— You describe everything so deliciously! Now it's time to share where visitors to sunny Uzbekistan can buy tea and where to enjoy the best tea service in Tashkent?

— For high-quality tea, head to specialty stores or local markets, where you'll find both loose-leaf and packaged varieties. Most likely, the vendor will ask about your blood pressure, as green tea can influence it. The most commonly consumed variety in Uzbekistan is "Green Tea No. 95", a classification that dates back to the Soviet era, ranging from lower-quality raw materials (No. 10) to the highest grade (No. 125). If you're visiting Tashkent, be sure to stop by Human House, an art gallery run by Lola Saifi. Not only is the tea there exceptional, but the presentation is also a delight – served in beautifully crafted

clay or ceramic teapots with traditional Uzbek patterns, reflecting the gallery's focus on craftsmanship. Plus, the tea is infused with aromatic mountain herbs or "deer grass" (ziziphora), which I've already mentioned.

— As far as I know, you try tea in every country you visit. What was your most memorable tea experience?

— Probably the most unforgettable tea experience I had was at the Shaolin Monastery high in the mountains, about two hours from Seoul, South Korea. There, we were treated to an incredible herbal tea – a truly unique and refreshing drink.

On the other hand, my biggest disappointment was my first trip to London, where I ended up living for four years. Naively assuming that I was going to a country that religiously follows the "five o'clock tea" tradition, I was surprised to find that most British people don't actually drink freshly brewed tea that often. Instead, they consume carbonated drinks with ice or coffee. However, I still managed to find delicious teas and always sought out new flavors. Now, I'm looking forward to my upcoming trip to Guangzhou, China, in early February, where I plan to dive into the local tea culture. The more rituals involved, the greater the pleasure of drinking tea.

In May 2025, Tashkent will host the international Coffee&Tea Fest Uzbekistan for the fourth time. The festival is dedicated to the development of the coffee and tea industry, as well as the revival and preservation of Uzbekistan's national tea-drinking traditions.



## CUP TWO. THE TEA CEREMONY – A CULTURAL TRADITION OF CHINA WITH A CENTURIES-OLD HISTORY

— My hometown, Xishuangbanna, in Yunnan Province, China, is located near the world-famous Pu-erh tea plantations. Naturally, my favorite green tea is Pu-erh – it has a unique aroma, a rich and refreshing taste, and a light sweetness that invigorates. I grew up surrounded by tea culture. Xishuangbanna often hosts training sessions for tea masters, and I also studied there, so I have mastered the art of tea ceremonies. When I arrived in Tashkent, I wanted to share high-quality Pu-erh from my hometown with the people of Uzbekistan, so I decided to open a tea shop here.

China hosts many tea-related events, including festivals, tastings, and musical tea gatherings. In my hometown, the Tea Battle Festival is especially popular. Farmers showcase their skills, we taste tea cakes, enjoy different varieties of tea, watch performances by ethnic groups, and simply relax. Let me explain: tea cakes are made by pressing tea leaves into flat discs. During tea drinking, you can break off small pieces, grind them, and brew them, adding ingredients like onion, ginger, orange, or other flavorings if desired.

— Zhou Zhou, how do people in China drink tea nowadays? Do they still find time for it, considering how fast-paced life has become worldwide?

— The tea ceremony is a cultural tradition in China with a centuries-old history, dating back to the Tang Dynasty (7th-9th century). On average, my fellow countrymen participate in tea ceremonies twice a week, spending their leisure time in the afternoon enjoying this beverage, the scent of incense, and calm meditative music in special tea rooms or tea houses. The ritual may vary depending on the region and the participants – for example, there are differences in ceremonies held for relatives versus friends.



**Zhou Zhou**  
owner of the Dragon Tea  
shop in Tashkent

The ceremony is conducted by a tea master, who is often dressed in traditional Hanfu clothing. The preparation stage involves selecting the tea, preparing the water (spring water is preferred), and setting up the utensils. The most popular tea in China comes from West Lake – Longjing (Dragon Well) tea – but more ceremonial varieties are chosen for formal occasions. During the serving stage, the tea is brewed in a way that fully reveals its flavor and aroma. During the tasting, the tea master showcases the art of tea drinking and offers guests a sample of the prepared tea. At this moment, both the guests and the master enjoy the beverage together.

In everyday life, many homes have a designated tea room where tea is enjoyed twice a day using special teapots. In northern China, tea drinking is given less attention and is mainly consumed to quench thirst. For example, in Shandong Province, tea is brewed in a large kettle and drunk cold in a few big gulps. In southern China, the tea ceremony culture is much more developed, and tea is enjoyed using specialized tea sets, including porcelain cups and teapots.

— How do people drink tea in Guangzhou, the city directly connected to Tashkent by our airline's flights?

— In Guangzhou, the culture of morning tea is especially well-developed and has become an integral part of daily life. Morning tea is not just breakfast; it's also a way to socialize. Just like Uzbeks, the people of Guangzhou love to drink tea in teahouses, where they enjoy snacks, engage in conversation, and savor each other's company.

Welcome to my store, where you'll find a variety of Pu-erh, Oolong, and aromatic teas, and get a taste of authentic Chinese tea culture!



## CUP THREE. THE CHINESE HISTORY OF GEORGIAN TEA

Eka (Ekaterina) Aptsauri, a native of Tbilisi for several generations, is a medical professional and the wife of a Georgian diplomat. She even has a connection to aviation – her eldest son, Igor, worked for the Georgian Civil Aviation Department and leading international airlines.

— One of the key milestones in the history of Georgian tea was the year 1847 when Count Mikhail Vorontsov initiated its import from China as an alternative to wine for soldiers. The drink was invigorating but not intoxicating, and it was then called "soldier's tea." Later, tea was produced with this date on the packaging, highlighting the significance of the event.

The emergence of tea plantations in Georgia is credited to merchant Konstantin Popov. Unlike those before him who merely imported tea, in 1893, he invited a



**Eka Aptsauri**  
A native of Tbilisi  
for several generations

Exposition Universelle! Interestingly, the Chakvi plantations eventually declined due to various circumstances, while in Guria, tea cultivation continues to produce high-quality harvests that are in demand both locally and internationally.



Later, our Chinese hero built a house in Chakvi and continued his work even after the October Revolution of 1917. According to some sources, his great-great-grandson still lives in Georgia to this day. Lau Jon Dau's house, which had been abandoned for many years, was recently restored, as far as I know. There are plans to open a museum there, which will also house exhibits

Chinese master, Liu Junzhou (known in Georgia as Lau Jon Dau). He conducted the first experiments and planted tea bushes in Ozurgeti (Guria), the Botanical Garden of Sukhumi (modern-day Abkhazia), and the Botanical Garden of Zugdidi (Megrelia). It turned out that Georgia's climate was highly suitable for tea cultivation, yielding high-quality, "pure" tea without the need for chemical treatments. The top three leaves – considered the most valuable – could be harvested. Later, with Lau Jon Dau's help, Popov expanded tea plantations in Chakvi, Adjara, achieving such success that by 1900, their tea won a gold medal at the Paris

from the Batumi Nobel House-Museum. In the center of Tbilisi, the Georgian Tea House-Museum is now open, founded on the initiative of Shota Bitadze, President of the Georgian Association of Organic Tea Producers. Visitors can explore the history of tea cultivation, view historical artifacts, and purchase high-quality tea varieties.



— *What kind of tea is traditionally consumed in Georgia today?*

— Traditionally, Georgians prefer black tea and enjoy drinking it with various additives such as fruits, sage, and saffron. However, the younger generation has started drinking green tea as well, thanks to the high-quality products now available through renewed cooperation with China. In general, I've noticed that more and more people are choosing a healthy lifestyle, following a balanced diet. The grand feasts of the past, with overeating and excessive alcohol consumption, are becoming less common.



— *How do tea gatherings take place in Tbilisi?*

— There are several types of tea gatherings, depending on the occasion—unexpected guests dropping by, an invitation for tea at a set time, a gathering resembling a salon reception with guitar or piano accompaniment, or tea as part of game nights, such as card games or lotto. Let me tell you more about each of them.

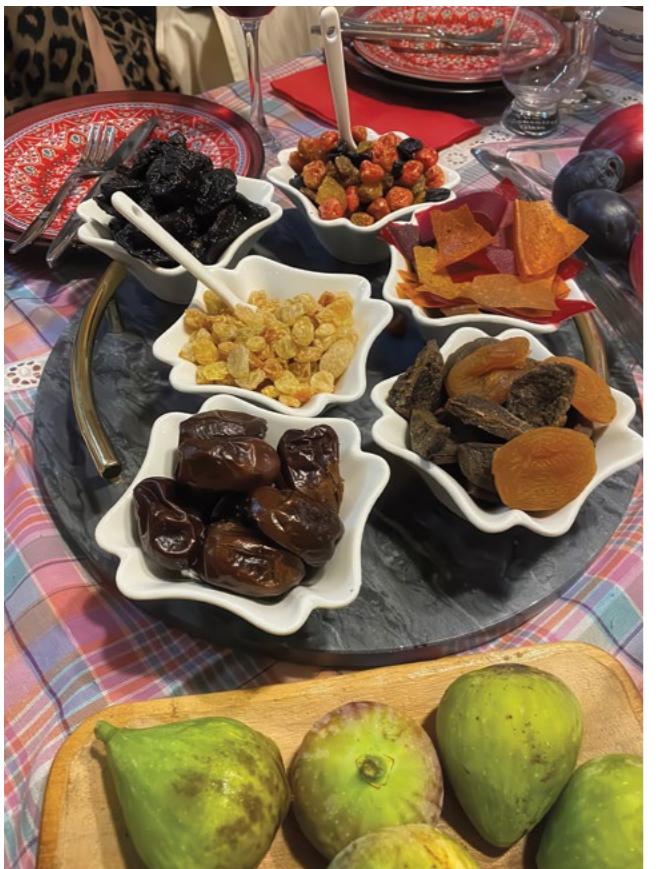


In Georgia, the doors of a home are always open; a guest is considered a messenger from God, and turning them away is unthinkable and bad manners. At the very least, when a guest arrives, tea is served in the main room. The tea is presented in delicate porcelain cups, lemon slices are placed on a crystal dish with a gilded fork, and sugar is a must. Nowadays, it can be cane sugar, but in the past, it was either refined sugar cubes or "sharkarkinuli" ("iced sugar"), which was pre-broken with special tongs. Every Georgian hostess is expected to have homemade jam.



Traditional varieties include watermelon, walnut, tangerine, paradise apple, and, of course, apricot with a whole nut inside. Jams are served in elegant footed glass bowls called "varennitsa." Now, onto my favorite part – how our grandmothers used to enjoy tea gatherings in Tbilisi. These are my warmest childhood and youth memories: elegant grandmothers and their

friends arriving in heeled shoes, carrying small handbags, wearing hats, and engaging in refined conversation. Tea gatherings could be a standalone event rather than just an extension of a meal and were often accompanied by singing or music. The Ishkhneli sisters were famous throughout Tbilisi for their magnificent singing and hosted popular salon evenings. Today, things happen much the same way.



If it's a ladies' gathering, a fine porcelain tea set will grace the table, whereas men in Georgia usually prefer drinking tea from glasses with ornate metal holders - some of them quite valuable. Other popular beverages include fruit compotes, with peach compote being a particular favorite, and homemade liqueurs, especially the well-loved cherry liqueur "vishnyovka". The table is laid out with "whatever God has provided": lemon slices, honey, nuts, dried fruits, fresh fruits - such as figs in season - khachapuri (of course, how could we do without it?). Baked pumpkin is often served, as well as nazuki, a sweet bread with honey and raisins, and baklava - it may not be entirely Georgian, but it is quite

acceptable. Sometimes, cheese is included, depending on the preferences of the host. You might even see pilaf, but it's not meat-based - rather, it's made with dried fruits and pumpkin, and sometimes even baked inside a whole pumpkin, depending on the hostess's choice.

Now, about the table setting: a proper tea table must be covered with a tablecloth. If the gathering is in the evening, the tablecloth is usually dark velvet with fringes. Napkins are carefully arranged, candles are placed... And the essential final touch - a lampshade over the table instead of a bright chandelier, creating a cozy and intimate atmosphere.

*— Did you host such Georgian tea gatherings while living abroad as the wife of an ambassador?*

— I didn't host separate tea gatherings, but I did take part in organizing diplomatic receptions. We welcomed guests in New York (USA), Beijing (China), and the Baltic states. Of course, we mostly set the table with traditional Georgian dishes, and khachapuri was always a must - it's an essential part of any gathering, no matter how lavish the feast. We brought spices and cornmeal from Georgia, but otherwise, we made do with local ingredients. We always tried to add a special touch - a bit of wine, churchkhela, or homemade jam.



*— Can you recommend where visitors to Georgia can buy and taste tea?*

— It's best to buy Georgian tea by weight, and there are many tea houses to choose from. If you're in Tbilisi, I recommend visiting the Gardenia Shevardnadze, a garden with seasonal plants where salon-style gatherings are held. In its cozy café, surrounded by flowers, you can enjoy a cup of tea along with excellent pastries. The garden's founder, Zurab Shevardnadze, is originally from Guria and produces his own tea, so you can confidently buy it there!

Georgia knows how to surprise - here, you can find not only black tea varieties but also some truly unique ones. How about Georgian oolong, Longjing tea from Samegrelo, or even purple tea?



## CUP FOUR: THE TEA MARKET IN GUANGZHOU – ONE OF THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD

— I start my day with a cup of tea. At home, I have a small collection of teapots: a semi-transparent jade teapot, a copper one, and a traditional antique teapot with a trick—you pour water into the bottom, but it flows out as usual from the spout. I drink two types of green tea: one of the most famous, Longjing ("Dragon Well"), and Maojian ("Hair Tip").

*— Katya, some say that the Guangzhou tea market is one of the largest in the world. Is that true?*

— The Fancun Tea Market in Guangzhou is indeed one of the largest in the world. And it's not the only one – there's anoth-



**Ekaterina Dorofeeva**

an art historian, sinologist, and Chinese language translator

er in the Panyu district. This market has existed since the early days of trade when Guangzhou was still Canton, the only port open to foreign merchants. Naturally, tea was one of the main exports.

In any shop at Fancun, you'll be warmly welcomed, offered tea, and invited to experience a traditional Chinese tea ceremony. Every tea master has their favorite varieties and unique Feng Shui decorations. A common sight on their tables is a money frog, which is poured over with the first infusion of tea. No tea master will ever serve you the first brew – it's always discarded.



I'll never forget one beautiful tea ceremony I witnessed. They demonstrated an ancient brewing method used when a tea master wasn't allowed to approach the emperor closer than two meters. Instead, he would pour tea over the emperor's shoulder using a teapot with a long spout.

At the tea market, you can find both famous varieties – such as Tieguanyin ("Iron Goddess of Mercy"), Oolong, Longjing ("Dragon Well"), Pu'er, Bi Luo Chun, and Da Hong Pao ("Big Red Robe") – as well as lesser-known, local teas. Between late April and early May, the freshest, newly harvested tea arrives. It's considered the most valuable, expensive, and aromatic. Some teas come in flower-shaped bundles or inside tiny tangerines, which look stunning when they unfurl in hot water.



Good tea is never cheap – I wouldn't expect to pay less than 100 yuan (~\$14) per 500 grams. Longjing green tea is one of the most expensive teas in China. Once, I bought 100 grams for 500 yuan (~\$70) – it was the most expensive tea I've ever purchased!

A few years ago, foreigners were often overcharged at Chinese markets, especially since prices aren't listed and are only given upon request. That's why it was wise to go with an experienced guide, or else prices would skyrocket, and you might end up with poor-quality tea. But China has changed, and I no longer see this happening as frequently. Still, when visiting a tea market, keep these golden rules in mind: always smell the tea before buying, sip loudly when tasting – it's completely acceptable, negotiate – bargaining is expected!

# CUP FIVE. «TEA, WE ARE NIZHNY NOVGOROD RESIDENTS»

Nizhny Novgorod is home to the author of this piece, Marina Gulyashcheva, and it was once the site of Russia's largest fair - a bridge between the peoples of the East and the West. Chinese tea, brought from the border town of Kyakhta, was such an essential commodity that its arrival signaled the start of major trade deals. It was at the Nizhny Novgorod Fair that Russian tea-drinking traditions began to take shape, and the locals were often called "water gulpers" for their love of tea.

More than a century and a half has passed, yet the distinctive word-link "chai" (meaning "tea") remains a signature feature of local speech. Phrases like "Chai, we are Nizhny Novgorod residents!" or "Chai, I won't be late for work!" are still heard in everyday conversations. This unique linguistic phenomenon was even immortalized in the poem *Tea* by our fellow countryman, Boris Pilnik.

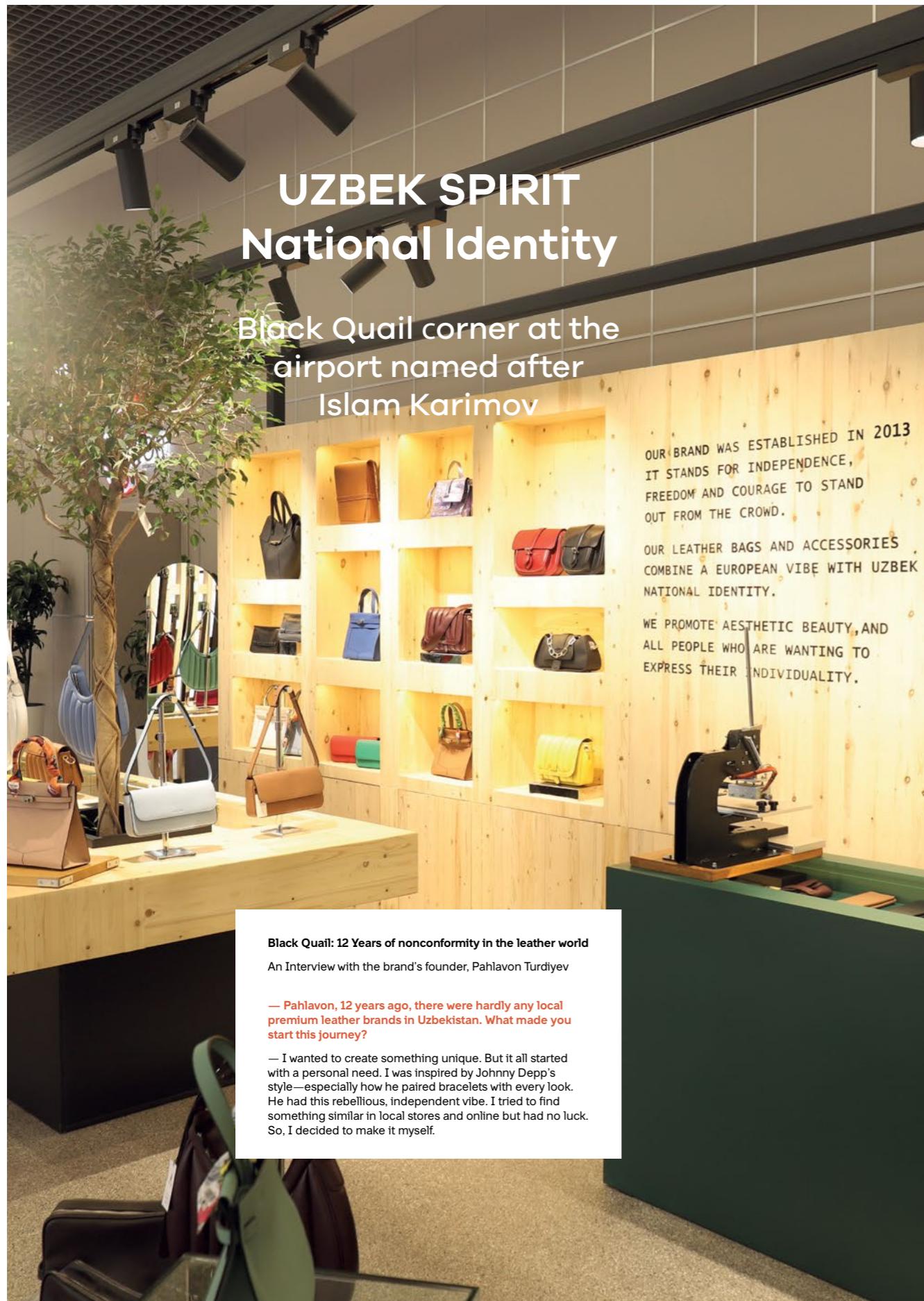
And as for the remaining cups of tea - we invite you to enjoy them in the cities where Centrum Air flies and in the places recommended by the heroes of our story.

«I feel the cool breath of the wind,  
gently swaying my sleeves.  
Where is Paradise?  
me ride the breeze and drift away there.»

Let me ride the breeze and drift away there.»

*Ancient Chinese poet.*





— Why the name Black Quail?

— The quail is a reference to Uzbek culture. Our grandfathers used to gather in teahouses, drink hot tea, eat plov, and listen to quails singing nearby. It's part of our roots, our identity. And black represents style, boldness, and a rebellious spirit. I've always been into alternative music and arthouse films, so I wanted to bring that energy into my designs. That's how Black Quail came to be—undeniably ours, deeply rooted in our heritage, yet with a touch of nonconformism, much like the black quail itself, a breed developed in England.

— What has changed over the past 12 years?

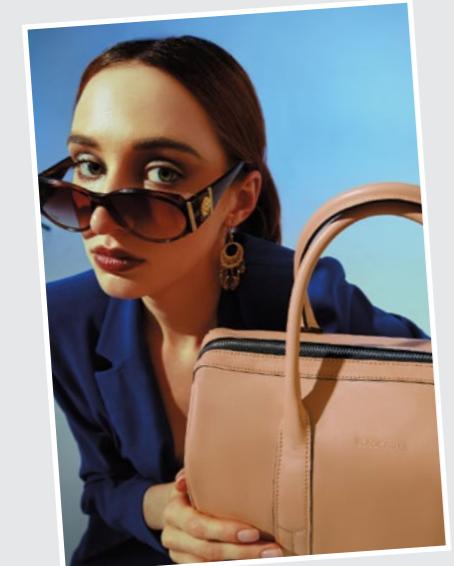
— In short, we've evolved—from a makeshift workshop at a kitchen table into a full-fledged brand. We experimented with designs, introduced new signature pieces with their own stories, modernized our brand identity, and explored exciting collaborations. There were times when I felt like giving up, but each time, I pushed forward. We survived the pandemic and economic crises, but we never compromised our vision. Today, we don't just have a recognizable style—we have a loyal community of people who trust our craftsmanship and choose Black Quail because it represents individuality, character, and standing apart from the crowd.

— Black Quail has a corner at Islam Karimov Tashkent International Airport. How did that come about?

— I wanted a piece of Uzbek culture, a fragment of our spirit, to accompany travelers as they departed. Opening a store in an international airport wasn't easy. But our determination, persistence, and belief that a local brand's products would resonate with visitors helped us convince Uzbekistan Airports to give us a chance. And we made sure not to waste it.

— What makes this airport corner special?

— We didn't just set up displays and place products on shelves. We created a true design space that tells a story about our culture. Working with one of the leading architects of Uzbek modernism, Bobir Klischev, and his team at ARC Architects, we crafted an environment inspired by Uzbek heritage. The design features *panzhara*—intricately carved wooden lattice screens—and *tokcha*—recessed wall niches traditionally used to store dishes or *kurpacha* (floor cushions). At the heart of the space stands a large *topchan* table, evoking memories of elders resting under shady trees on hot summer days. Additionally, our airport corner is the first to showcase new collections, and prices are more attractive since they are set without VAT.



— How do you create Black Quail pieces?

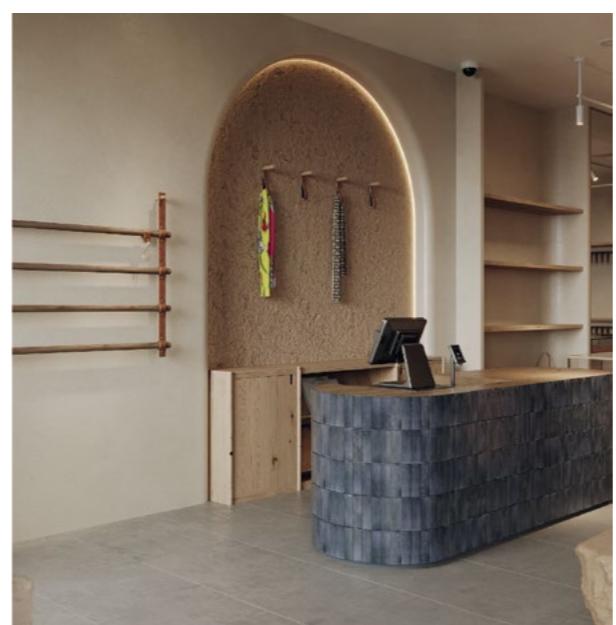
— Our creative process starts with seeking inspiration in the world around us — architecture, cinema, nature, fine art. Every collection begins with a mood board, where I gather concepts and imagery centered around a specific theme. From there, I sketch designs that are then passed on to our artisans for prototyping. After refining and finalizing the models, we move into production. In 2021, we underwent a rebranding to emphasize our commitment to innovation and contemporary design. Our latest bag collection, launched in 2021, captures the essence of the early 2000's and is designed for those who are bold and confident.

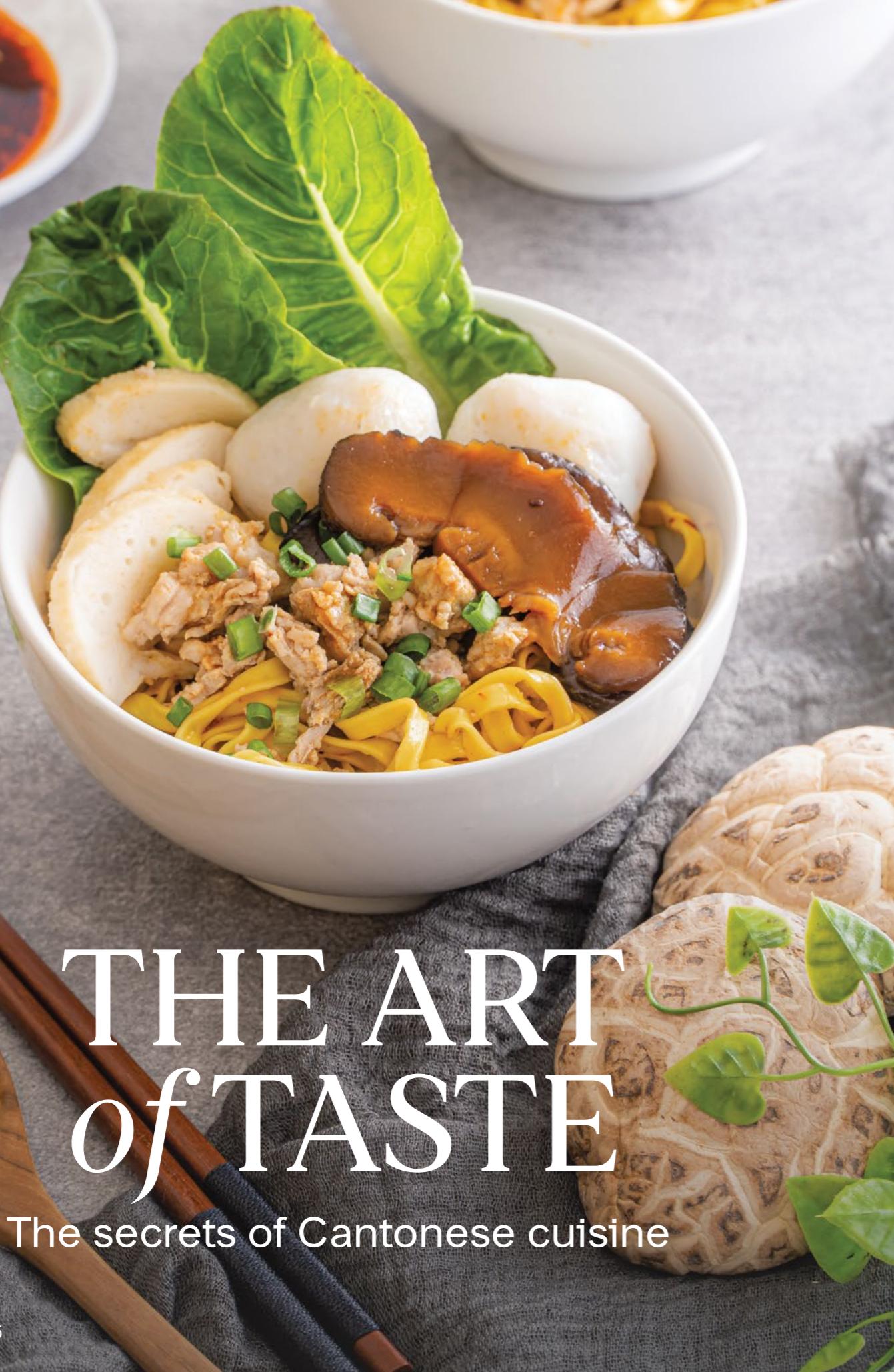


— What are your plans for 2025?

— We're continuing to grow without losing sight of who we are. In 2025, we remain committed to crafting new collections, drawing inspiration from both global trends and Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage. We're planning to expand into international markets, broaden our product line, and experiment with design. Black Quail remains a brand for those who appreciate style, rebellion, and authenticity. We're not just making leather goods — we're telling a story that fuses modernity with cultural identity.

This year, we're also making a return to offline retail, with our new store opening at Istikbol, 18 Street, right in the heart of the Tashkent city. It will introduce a completely new way for us to connect with our customers, and we're ready to surprise. So stay tuned—this is just the beginning of a new chapter.





# THE ART of TASTE

The secrets of Cantonese cuisine



**Vincent Lin**

Vice President of Sales  
at Oriental Sky Aviation

**C**antonese cuisine, the epitome of refinement and harmony, has won the hearts of gourmets around the world. Its emphasis on fresh ingredients, the delicate mastery of balancing flavors and its deep connection to traditions make it a true culinary art form. We spoke with Vincent Lin, a native of Guangzhou and Vice President of Sales at Oriental Sky Aviation, to uncover what makes Cantonese cuisine so unique and unparalleled.

Cantonese cuisine prioritizes highlighting the natural flavors of ingredients, often with minimal use of heavy spices or sauces. It also reflects the coastal location of Guangdong, featuring an abundance of seafood. Unlike Sichuan cuisine, known for its fiery spiciness due to its abundance of chili and Sichuan pepper, or Shanghai cuisine, characterized by its sweet accents and preference for braised dishes with soy sauce, Cantonese chefs focus on lightness and naturalness. With minimal use of spices and heavy seasonings, the true taste of fresh ingredients shines through.

*"Cantonese cuisine demonstrates how the natural freshness of ingredients creates a richness of flavors".*



### THE FLAVORFUL FACETS OF GUANGDONG

In different cities across Guangdong province, Cantonese cuisine takes on unique characteristics, making it even more fascinating and diverse. For example, Guangzhou is renowned for its traditional dim sum, small gastronomic masterpieces and roasted meat dishes prepared according to classic regional recipes.

Shenzhen, being a young and dynamic city, has absorbed the influence of numerous migrants, which is reflected in its local cuisine. Here, traditional dishes are often reinterpreted with a modern twist, incorporating fusion elements that blend tradition with contemporary trends. Meanwhile, Shunde, often referred to as the culinary capital of the region, is famous for

its innovative cooking techniques. In this city, a creative approach and mastery in preparing seafood are especially valued, crafting dishes that captivate both the imagination and the palate. These differences between cities only highlight the richness and diversity of Cantonese cuisine, while its versatility and harmony of flavors continue to inspire gourmets around the world.

### WHAT ABOUT THE ORIGINS?

The development of Cantonese cuisine has been significantly influenced by both historical events and the cultural characteristics of the region. Guangzhou, as an important trade hub, has served as China's gateway to the world since ancient times. This led to the introduc-

tion of foreign spices, ingredients, and culinary techniques. Migration waves also played a pivotal role, as foreign communities settling in the region enriched local cuisine with their traditions, creating unique fusion elements. The abundance of natural resources cannot be overlooked either. Guangdong's coastal location provided access to a wide variety of seafood, while fertile lands enabled the cultivation of fresh vegetables and fruits, laying the foundation for Cantonese cuisine's renowned emphasis on freshness and natural flavors.

*"Each dish of Cantonese cuisine tells its own story, reflecting the rich culture and traditions of the region. Every serving becomes not just a meal/treat, but a true journey into the world of centuries-old gastronomic heritage".*

### ICONIC DISHES

Cantonese cuisine features 5 iconic dishes, each embodying its traditions while combining natural flavors, high-quality ingredients, and culinary expertise:

- Dim Sum (a variety of dumplings): a symbol of Cantonese food culture, showcasing variety and culinary mastery in small, delicate portions.
- Char Siu (roasted BBQ pork): the sweet and savory glaze epitomizes the style of Cantonese barbecue.
- Wonton Noodle Soup: a simple yet exquisite dish that reflects the balance and purity of the cuisine.
- Steamed Fish: highlights the freshness of ingredients, a cornerstone of Cantonese cuisine philosophy.
- White Cut Chicken: emphasizes the natural flavor of high-quality poultry.



**WHAT ARE THE COOKING SECRETS?**

The principles and techniques of Cantonese cooking have been rigorously observed over the centuries. These include the emphasis on freshness, achieved through the use of high-quality ingredients, the balanced addition of seasonings to enhance natural flavors, the aesthetics of serving, and the verified precision of cooking. To preserve the texture and taste of the ingredients, Cantonese chefs often steam, roast/stir-fry, or braise their dishes. And, of course, all of this is accompanied by beautiful serving.

*"Our cuisine is not just about taste; visual appeal is equally important here".*

**MORE THAN JUST FOOD**

Without exaggeration, it can be said that food in Guangdong is a key part of everyday life. Each resident starts their day with a sip of delicious "yum cha" tea, followed by indulging in dim sum. By dinner time, the table transforms into a haven of fresh seafood. But the most important aspect of all this is the bonds between people who gather around the table, as a meal is an excellent opportunity to strengthen family or business relationships.

*"For us, residents of Guangdong, cuisine is a way to be closer to each other".*

**FESTIVE DISHES**

Traditional festive dishes of Guangdong are not only delicious but also informative, as they introduce us to the culture and customs of the region.

*"The form and taste of festive dishes are connected to the centuries-old tradition of honoring history and cultural heritage".*

Mooncakes, a symbol of unity and harmony, invariably adorn tables during the mid-autumn festival, when families gather to admire the full moon. Tangyuan, sweet rice balls symbolizing family warmth, are served during the Lantern Festival. Roast suckling pig with crispy skin and tender meat is a must-have dish at weddings and major celebrations as a symbol of abundance and prosperity. And zongzi, rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves, are prepared for the Dragon Boat Festival in memory of the poet Qu Yuan, who drowned himself into the river to protest against the emperor's injustice. According to legend, after his death, people mourned him, boarded boats, and searched for the poet's body in the water for a long time. Fishermen threw rice, eggs and rice wine into the water so that the Water Dragon and other inhabitants of the river would not eat the remains of Qu Yuan.





#### THE NEW LIFE OF CANTONESE CUISINE

Today, we are witnessing fascinating trends in the way Cantonese cuisine is being tailored for an international audience. First, recipes are being simplified to better align with Western tastes and dining habits. This allows people unfamiliar with authentic dishes to enjoy them without a feeling of something so alien. Second, local ingredients are being actively incorporated. For example, instead of the traditional whole chicken, the more familiar chicken breast is increasingly used in dishes. And of course, one should not fail to mention the fusion trend. Modern interpretations of Cantonese dishes surprise with unexpected combinations: dim sum with truffle purée or smoked salmon has become a true hit. All these changes not only preserve the spirit of Cantonese cuisine, but also make it more accessible and appealing to people around the world.

#### A FLAVOR THAT CONQUERED THE WORLD

Cantonese cuisine has gained worldwide popularity due to its remarkable ability to tailor any taste while remaining true to its origins. The art of emphasizing the freshness of ingredients, combining delicacy and harmony makes it a true gastronomic treasure. Immigrants from Guangdong played a key role in spreading these culinary traditions. Thanks to their efforts, Cantonese restaurants have appeared in major metropolitan areas of the world, ranging from New York to London, from Sydney to Tokyo. Today, crispy dim sum, flavorful soups and refined sauces have become synonymous with sophistication and gastronomic pleasure, uniting food lovers around the world in their love of this unique cuisine.

#### HOW TO START TO EXPLORE THE CUISINE?

We would suggest to start exploring Cantonese cuisine with the most recognizable dishes. Surely, you've guessed that we will begin with dim sum—the symbol of the gastronomic art of the entire region. These tiny dumplings with various fillings, be it shrimp, pork or vegetables, are simply made to win hearts. And they are truly delicious! And what about the pork in sweet and sour sauce? It's a perfect blend of flavors that leaves no one indifferent. Then there's Char Siu—roast pork with a caramelized glaze, whose aroma alone is enough to whet your appetite. Those who prefer halal food will appreciate steamed fish with soy sauce - a dish that emphasizes the main principles of Cantonese cuisine: freshness of ingredients and minimalism in preparation.



And one should wrap up the exploration by trying the roast goose, whose crispy skin and succulent meat are considered a true masterpiece of Cantonese gastronomy. Finally, no Cantonese meal is complete without egg tarts. With their delicate custard filling and flaky crust, these desserts deliver the perfect finishing touch—one bite, and you'll fall in love with Cantonese cuisine.

#### WE'VE ALREADY TRIED IT! HAVE YOU?

The editorial staff of Centrum Travel Magazine embarked on a gastronomic expedition to Guangzhou, and we can say with full confidence that Cantonese cuisine is not just food, it's a true art. The Centrum Air crew, who shared this culinary adventure with us, couldn't get enough of how vividly and succulently these flavors resonated, where every ingredient perfectly complements the other. Even the most sophisticated gourmets couldn't help but be amazed. From our beloved dim sum to flavorful soups and exquisite appetizers, every meal here turns into a little discovery.

So, if you haven't been to Guangzhou yet, soon pack your bags and do visit this city where food is not just a necessity, but a real ritual of enjoyment. The food is really delicious, the atmosphere is indeed amazing here, and trust us, your gastronomic journey will stay in your memory for a long time!



# SHALVA AMONASHVILI: THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE IS A TEACHER WHO BRINGS LIGHT

**I**n an era of rapid technological development and constant reforms in education, pedagogical traditions remain key, especially in countries with a rich cultural heritage, such as Uzbekistan and Georgia. We are united not only by history, but also by a common view of education as a process of personality formation. We decided to discuss this topic with the humanist teacher Shalva Amonashvili, who visited Tashkent with a lecture on education. He told us why education without spirituality loses its meaning, how to raise a child in love and what it means to be a real teacher.

## — SHALVA ALEKSANDROVICH, WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION AND LOVE?

— It's hard to say for sure. Probably, my whole life, which I lived, starting from infancy... My parents were very kind people. My father worked in a printing house, from where he often brought interesting books. My mother was a housewife, she completely devoted herself to raising my sister and me. Unfortunately, my father died in the war in 1942, and the care of us fell on the shoulders of my grandmother, a wise and kind woman. She read prayers to me, and although I did not believe in God, her words filled my soul with warmth. Every time she began to pray, I told her that there was no God, and she answered: "There is a true God, and you – just listen to me." And I listened to her voice with rapture. These memories have stayed with me forever.

Another very important circumstance. At school I met a real mentor – my teacher Varvara Vardiashvili. She is the teacher who helped me become who I am now. The name Ilia Vardiashvili is translated from Georgian as "pink", and this perfectly reflects her character. She taught her native language and literature, and, unlike many teachers, she simply loved her students. There was a lack of love at school – the teachers were preoccupied with their own problems, and this reflected on us. Most of them were simply strict and demanding, but Varvara Vardiashvili was the one who loved children by nature, and it was in love that she sought solutions to all problems. I adopted many principles from her, which later became the basis of my teaching activities.

Throughout my journey, I have encountered a variety of people. There were those who gave me sound advice on how to act in different circumstances, those who supported me and led me through life. But there were also those who expressed their disagreement with my methods of work. This was especially evident when I began to conduct pedagogical experiments with my colleagues – many traditionalists rebelled against us. They could not or simply did not want to accept the new principles of

education, they saw us as a threat to their canons and teaching methods. I had to face opposition, denunciations and slander. Sometimes I felt helpless because I had no way to defend myself from their attacks. But there were always people nearby who supported me, and this helped me move forward.

## — HAVE YOU BEEN TO UZBEKISTAN BEFORE? WHAT IMPRESSIONS DID YOU HAVE FROM PREVIOUS VISITS?

— I first came to Uzbekistan in 1989. At that time, my trip was connected with a special mission: I had to go to Afghanistan as a representative of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to free a Georgian prisoner. Afterwards, I briefly visited Tashkent, but I had almost no time to get to know the country.

My current visit is completely different. I meet teachers, observe their work and am amazed by the culture of respect – I feel it in communication with each of them, although I do not deserve such warmth from strangers. I do not think that I have done anything special for which I am ennobled with such honors, and yet the exceptional attention, intelligence, desire for knowledge sincerely please me. I especially remember meeting with teachers in several schools: they listened, asked questions, sought to understand humane pedagogy more deeply. Their sincere interest impressed me, and I am immensely grateful to my colleagues.

## — WHAT DOES HUMANE PEDAGOGY MEAN TO YOU, AND HOW DOES THIS APPROACH MAKE THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS MORE HUMANE?

— It would not be entirely wrong to say that humane pedagogy makes the educational process more humane, and humanizes it as a whole. It is not just a method, but a whole philosophy. Its roots go back to the works of Comenius, Pestalozzi, Ushinsky, Sukhomlinsky, Montessori. I tried to create a system of views and ideology, a mixture of psychology and philosophy, which would help modern teachers to understand and accept new principles. Time goes by, and everything changes with it. Even the exact sciences are subject to change, what can we say about art? And pedagogy is an art.

**WITH A HUMANE APPROACH TO UPBRINGING, CHILDREN'S ABILITIES AND TALENTS ARE REVEALED, ONES WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW EXISTED.**

The main concept in humane pedagogy is spirituality. If parents raise their children with love and respect, they themselves come to a humane approach. But if they replace humanity with authoritarianism (and many like to do this), then real pedagogy turns into an instrument of pressure. And then they complain that our principles are ineffective, although in fact they use

authoritarian education. Also, many teachers say that they love children. But can love be shown only through tests, grades, calling parents to school? Such methods do not promote love. How can a student love a teacher who conducts a test, then underlines the mistakes in red ink, and then scolds: "Why do you make such mistakes? I explained it many times!" There is no room for love in such an atmosphere. An irritated teacher transmits his irritation to the child, and this does not lead to anything good.

It turns out that there is neither full-fledged education nor upbringing in the classical sense at school. Education is called the usual process of learning, substituting concepts. But education is something more. Not even more, but the main thing. It covers not only learning, but also development, personality formation and much more. However, we do not have a full-fledged educational process, although we issue certificates of secondary education.

But does the child have a secondary education? He has only a certain set of knowledge, which we conventionally call the average level. However, education is not just knowledge. It is the ability to think, to look at the world philosophically. It is faith in something sacred. School should give the child a foundation on which he can rely in life. Give him something sacred - moral guidelines, an understanding of the importance of loving and respecting others, or at least show that there are different views in the world, because the child should know about this and have the opportunity to make his own choice.

What does school give? Only knowledge without understanding how to apply it. Thus, humane pedagogy is replaced by authoritarian values. Here is a simple example: in some religions, it is believed that earthly life is a preparation for eternity. Why can't you tell a child: "There are different points of view. Some say that there is no soul, and therefore, no eternity. Others say that the soul exists." He must have a choice. This is the essence of humane pedagogy. It gives freedom of choice, forms not only the intellect, but also the spirit of a person.

love a child in different ways. You can do it selfishly: "This is my joy, my future, my gold" or you can do it consciously, understanding that this is not just your child, but a soul entrusted to you for upbringing. True upbringing is preparing a person to bring happiness to others.

Humane pedagogy reminds: love children, follow these commandments. A teacher is the one who carries the light, and if this light burns inside, then even the subject he teaches takes on a new meaning. School should not just teach, but form a personality. Then we will get not just students, but thinking, spiritually rich people.

True education is the education of the spirit, not merely the transmission of knowledge.

**— WHAT VALUES DO YOU CONSIDER FUNDAMENTAL FOR A STRONG FAMILY AND SUCCESSFUL UPBRINGING?**

— The value I want to talk about is not just my personal one. It is a universal principle, the foundation of family and life itself. We are talking about sincere love between spouses – love that gives birth to care for each other and for children, leaving less and less room for conflict.

**IN AUTHORITARIAN UPBRINGING, THE PARENT HOLDS COMPLETE POWER OVER THE CHILD. IF CHILDREN DON'T WANT TO DO SOMETHING, THEY ARE FORCED THROUGH COERCION OR PUNISHMENT. THIS DEPRIVES CHILDREN OF INDEPENDENCE AND TAKES AWAY THEIR FUTURE.**

getting married is easy, but there is something much more complicated behind it. You are no longer alone, there are two of you. You are losing some of your freedom, because now you have to take into account the opinion of someone close to you. You promised to make her happy - so keep that promise."

This needs to be discussed, because the foundations of family life are, first and foremost, humane values.

**— HOW DO YOU COMBINE YOUR PERSONAL BELIEFS WITH YOUR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES IN EDUCATION?**

— Professional activity inevitably becomes part of personal beliefs – everything in life is intertwined. I do not

Of course, disagreements are inevitable. But what does it mean to love? It means being able to forgive and give in. The one who takes the first step towards you shows wisdom and fortitude. Say: "Yes, darling, what's the difference? I love you. Do as you see fit. If you want to go, let's go. If you don't want to, fine, we'll stay." And then she, feeling cared for, will respond in kind: "Darling, I trust you. Let's do as you suggest."

This is how conflicts disappear and mutual understanding becomes stronger. This is a real family - when there is trust, love becomes deeper, stronger, filled with true care.

Someone needs to explain to young guys and girls who are just planning to start a family: "Son,





adapt to circumstances, but remain myself. It is not the profession that defines me, but I myself fill it with my character, my values. This is how I build my work in education.

A teacher should not offend children. Even in the strictest schools, he must respect them - this is the law. But in reality, this is often violated. Why? Because personal qualities sometimes replace rules, and humane pedagogy is good by its nature. It does not depend on external conditions. Wherever I am - at a meeting, at lunch, in front of an audience - my inner values, philosophy and views on the world always manifest themselves.

A profession is something deeply personal. Some perceive work as a separate part of life: come, work, leave. For me, it is an extension of my character, my world-view.

There is an opinion that people wear different masks: a child - in front of parents, a friend - among relatives, a student - in front of a teacher. But I think it is better to be yourself everywhere. Not to hide behind images, not to adapt, but to remain who you are.

I don't change depending on the person I'm talking to. Whether it's a conversation with you, a conversation

with my son, colleagues or friends - I remain myself. After all, a mask is an attempt to hide the truth, and I choose sincerity. In the family, in the profession, in life.

**— WHAT DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN APPROACHES TO EDUCATION HAVE YOU NOTICED BETWEEN GEORGIA AND UZBEKISTAN?**

— Georgian traditional education retains many valuable qualities, although some of them require rethinking in modern realities. But among its main advantages are deep respect for elders, special respect for women, strong family ties, devotion and love for parents. These values form responsibility, respect and a sense of duty in a person from childhood, creating a solid foundation for a harmonious society.

Such traditions are also inherent in Uzbek culture. They are passed down from generation to generation, preserving a spiritual foundation in a world where traditions are gradually being eroded. However, it is important not only to preserve them, but also to adapt them to modern times so that they remain viable and useful for future generations.

At the same time, some established beliefs may not only be wrong, but also harmful. For example, the ex-

pression: "If you want a child to become your friend, raise him as an enemy" does not stand up to criticism. Trust and respect are not built on fear and confrontation. You cannot expect friendship if you raise a child in an atmosphere of conflict.

Children who grow up in constant struggle do not learn love and trust. On the contrary, they develop aggression, wariness, and a desire for competition. They begin to perceive the world as a battlefield, and their loved ones as competitors. But is this the basis for a strong family?

The person you raise your child to be is the person he will become. If you cultivate hostility, he will see enemies around him. But if you surround him with love, respect and support, he will learn to respond in kind. Family is not a place for fighting for power, but a space of trust, understanding and care. This is the only way to create a society where respect is born not from fear, but from sincere love.

**— GEORGIA AND UZBEKISTAN ARE COUNTRIES WITH RICH TEA TRADITIONS. IN THIS ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE, WE HAVE PAID SPECIAL ATTENTION TO TEA CEREMONIES. TELL US, WHAT KIND OF TEA DO YOU PREFER?**

— Our whole family loves herbal teas – they fill the house with coziness and bring true warmth. If I have to choose between black and green tea, I usually lean towards green – its fresh, slightly tart taste is invigorating and gives a sense of harmony. I also enjoy discovering new flavors and trying exotic teas. One of the most delightful discoveries for me has been Uzbek mountain tea – it is incredibly aromatic, rich, and leaves a pleasant aftertaste, as if transporting you to mountain valleys filled with natural freshness and strength.

**— WHAT MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST PRESSING, AND HOW DOES YOUR APPROACH HELP TO OVERCOME THEM?**

— One of the main problems of modern education is the loss of spirituality. And it's not that it doesn't exist at all, but that the authoritarian system simply leaves no room for it.

But spirituality cannot be forced into existence – it cannot be regulated or written into standards. The only way out is to let the outdated system live out its days and give way to a humane education based on respect, personal development, and meaningful learning.

Some teachers continue to work using old methods because they cannot do otherwise. So be it. But there are those who are ready to build something new – they are the ones who need to be supported.

It is impossible to reform a school from above. You can update textbooks, change standards, install new desks

and equip classrooms with modern technology. But if the teacher himself does not change, if there is no "reform" of his soul, there will be no real renewal of the school.

It may sound a little sad, but that's the reality.

Humane pedagogy brings back the spiritual component to education, which is so lacking. I am convinced that if we change just this one aspect, many problems will resolve themselves.

**— WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD YOU GIVE TO THOSE WHO ARE JUST STARTING THEIR JOURNEY IN PEDAGOGY AND ARE STRIVING FOR A HUMANE VISION OF EDUCATION?**

— If a young teacher comes to school after university, it is important for him to immediately focus on advanced ideas. You should not simply reproduce the patterns laid down in the university and rooted in the school system. You need to consciously free yourself from outdated approaches and build training on new principles.

A real new teacher is not someone who is young in age, but someone who has fresh, bold ideas. Age does not matter. Can a person who brings something new to education be called "old"? Of course not. It is ideas that make us young.

Therefore, it is worth starting with key concepts - spirituality, love, respect. Yes, there will be many difficulties along this path, but the main thing is not to return to authoritarian methods, not to give in to doubts, not to say to yourself: "What if I'm wrong?" or "It's easier to follow the old, beaten path." The past is over, it no longer exists.

**EVERY PARENT WISHES HAPPINESS FOR THEIR CHILD. BUT WHAT IS IT? IS IT SPIRITUAL? IF SO, WHY DON'T WE CULTIVATE IT FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD? IS IT MATERIAL? BUT IS THAT TRUE HAPPINESS? I AM CONVINCED: REAL HAPPINESS LIES IN LOVE!**





It is important to look only forward - into the world where it is the teacher who is able to change the system for the better and find a true calling in his profession.

**— HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION, WHERE LOVE, RESPECT AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING REMAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS?**

— You know, yesterday I saw an amazing building, impressive in its scale of space and amazing beauty. Many imagine the school of the future as an ultra-modern building, equipped with the latest technology, with computers in every classroom and updated programs. But all this is just the outer shell.

The real future of the school is determined not by technology, but by the teacher. It is his character, his views

that form the new education. When a teacher with a lively, free mind comes to school, he is already creating the school of the future. Such a teacher does not cling to the past, but opens the way forward, inspiring students and colleagues. He is respected, people learn from him, he becomes a conductor of change.

The school of the future is not about walls or technology. It is about the heart and mind of a teacher who changes education from the inside.

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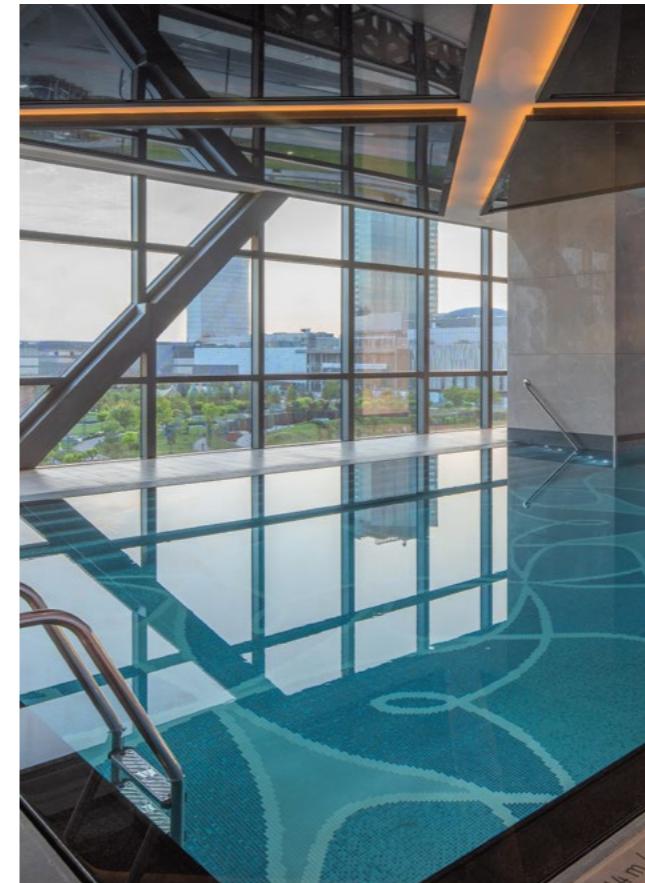
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