

Passport NY Morocco

Cover your arms in henna and feast on fluffy couscous—we think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. By **Cristina Velocci**

BE A MOROCCAN

→ If your knowledge of Morocco starts with camels and ends with *Casablanca*, *Babel* or *Ishtar*, you need to attend "Africa: Conversations with a Continent," a panel discussion at the **92nd Street Y** (1395 Lexington Ave at 92nd St, 212-415-5500; 7-9pm, \$20-\$25) on **Wednesday 27**. Berber art professor Cynthia Becker and Moroccan scholar Habiba Boumlik will gather to discuss the country's art, culture and political history.

→ Henri Matisse's *The Moroccans* at MoMA is one of the few permanent artworks in New York City to come out of Morocco, but you can catch the work of native artist Safaa Erruas in *Perspectives: Women, Art and Islam* at the **Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts** (80 Hanson Pl at S Portland Ave, Fort Greene, Brooklyn; 718-230-0492; June 4-Sept 13, suggested donation \$4). Her womblike installation of textiles is running in conjunction with the Muslim Voices: Arts & Ideas festival (muslimvoices.org).

→ Moroccans believe bodily adornment with henna wards off danger. Set up a house call with henna artist **Lisa Butterworth (a.k.a. Kenzi)** (718-789-1545; \$60-\$100 per hour). She specializes in Moroccan designs, which she describes as "very geometric, incorporating straight lines," and imports her henna from Marrakech.

→ Now that your body is exquisitely decorated, head to the **Morocco Academy of Mid-Eastern Dance** (6 W 20th St between Fifth and Sixth Aves, second floor; 212-727-8326, casbahdance.org) for a serious workout. Beginner classes (Mon, Fri 6:15pm, \$15-\$65) teach you the hip-jutting moves of *raqs sharqi*, the social



Tagine Dining Gallery

folk dance most commonly (and incorrectly) known as belly dancing. The proper translation is "Oriental dance." "It's older than the shifting lines in the sand that we call borders," says studio owner Morocco, who will be teaching a traditional *schikhhatt* on **Sunday 24** (noon, \$50).

CONSUME LIKE A MOROCCAN

→ The long-standing **Cafe Mogador** (101 St. Marks Pl between First Ave and Ave A, 212-677-2226) has been satiating *harissa*-craving taste buds since 1983 via its signature fluffy couscous, garnished with chickpeas, honey-steeped onions and raisins (\$11.50-\$17). Chase your chicken *bastilla* meat pie (\$14.50) with a pot of Moroccan green tea (\$4), served with mint and sugar.

→ Expats longing for a taste of home head to **La Maison Du Couscous** (484 77th St between Fourth and Fifth Aves, Bay Ridge, Brooklyn; 718-921-2400) for phyllo cigars (\$5.95) stuffed with spiced meat or veggies. Dishes like the *canard à l'orange* (\$24.95) incorporate French influences, a nod to the country's period as a French protectorate in the early 20th century.

Cafe Mogador



Mosaic House

→ Dancer Morocco raves about **Tagine Dining Gallery** (537 Ninth Ave between 39th and 40th Sts, 212-564-7292) for its pigeon pie (\$18.95) and traditional lamb tagine with prunes, almonds and sesame seeds (\$21). The restaurant offers a three-hour Moroccan cooking class the last Sunday of every month (\$85).

→ Chrystie Street gives way to Casablanca behind the unassuming wooden door of **Kush Lounge** (191 Chrystie St between Rivington and Stanton Sts, 212-677-7328). The arabesque archways and North African-inspired cocktails like the Bollywood (\$12) all nod to Morocco. Kush also offers 19 fruity hookah flavors for patrons to puff, adding to the Middle Eastern vibe.

SHOP LIKE A MOROCCAN

→ We're just as sick of our shredded John Belushi poster as you probably are of yours. Bring your apartment measurements to **Mosaic House** (32 W 22nd St between Fifth and Sixth Aves, 212-414-2525) and choose from the decorative ceramic tiles in eye-popping colors, handcrafted in a Fez factory.

→ Family-run **Moroccan Prestige** (626 W 28th St at Eleventh Ave, call 212-741-1470 for an appointment) has become a go-to source

time out
5-2008

Morocco Academy of Mid-Eastern Dance



→ Morocco was the first country to recognize America's independence, in 1777.

→ Large Moroccan communities reside in Bay Ridge and Astoria, but there are no mosques officially associated with the nation in the five boroughs. Visit Turkish mosque **Fatih Camil** (5911 Eighth Ave at 59th St, Sunset Park, Brooklyn; 718-438-6919), where Moroccans tend to congregate.

→ When your boyfriend does something nice, coo "habibi" (if it's your girlfriend, *habibti*), which translates to "my sweetie." If he screws up, bellow "hashooma," or "shame on you."

for set designers (items have been featured in the movie *Duplicity* and on *Gossip Girl*). "We call it Aladdin's cave," says owner Salaheddine Benyoussef of his 1,000-square-foot bazaar. You can score a bona fide fez (\$35) here, and it's the only place in the city that sells traditional *caidale* tents.

→ For more Moroccan goodies, **Sheherazade** (121 Orchard St between Delancey and Rivington Sts, 212-539-1771) stocks gold-leaf tea glasses (\$7) and dainty *babouche* slippers (\$50). Pick up a leather pouf (\$195) and a brass Hand of Fatima (\$16), said to protect against the evil eye—you'll need it to combat the envious glares from your friends.

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Lisa Butterworth (a.k.a. Kenzi)