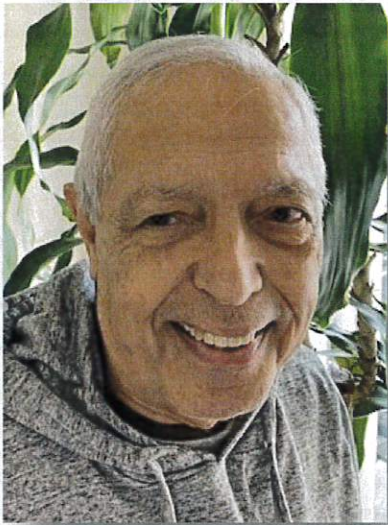


C'est Magnifique en Morocco

By Jyotin Sachdev



My 3-year pandemic lock-down finally percolated to a Just-Do-It decision for a getaway. An itch that needed to be scratched before another virus variant raised its ugly crown.

Through a circuitous (and serendipitous) series of conversations, an upcoming trip to Morocco with a small group came into focus. Morocco had a certain adventurous and romantic charm about it: Oceans. Desert. Mountains. A blend of Cultures and Cuisines heavily influenced by the French which also serves as an official second language.

In mid-October I was on a plane to Marrakesh with another gentleman in the group. The other three – a delightful coterie of ladies who had grown up together – made up our motley bunch. One of them was our tour guide who had coordinated many such trips to Morocco before and knew the “lay-of-the-land”.

I kept my on-line exploration of Morocco to some basic, essential facts – leaving the

rest to the unfolding of unexpected places, alleyways, tastes, landscapes and the thrill of the unknown! Our itinerary of ten days included stays in two cities: Marrakesh and the coastal city of Essaouira where the Western bulge of Northwest Africa juts into the Atlantic ocean.

The city of Essaouira was a sensory (and culinary) delight surpassing my expectations! Just Google “Essaouira” and lose yourself in a remarkable virtual tour – just as I did in the real labyrinth of cobble-



stoned alleys, shops, restaurants and magnificent plazas.

There was one memorable, lazy afternoon on an organic farm in the countryside outside Essaouira that stands out distinctly in my memory: *Akal bbio ferme*. On a winding dirt road into the desert scrub and brush, about a mile off the main highway, one comes upon this lush paradise of a farm throbbing with fresh orchards of pomegranates, papayas, olives, berries, bananas...

Rows of immaculate fresh greens, broccoli, beets, ... Plantings of hibiscus, lavender,

roses, nasturtiums, mint, sage, rosemary, ... and secret caverns of cultivated mushrooms. Chickens, roosters and sheep roamed in open air enclaves.

As the only visitors, we leisurely meandered around this heady environment with a glass of fresh cold lemonade and mint, while our meal was prepared in an earthen clay oven, beside a simple wooden table, under a shady grove. Our delightful chef and staff worked in one of the many cafes that the farm catered to.

We started with fresh green salads sprinkled with a delectable array of fruits, herbs and edible flowers. Placed before us in a simple unhurried way, came a dish of layered meats and vegetables infused with herbs, spices and sauces, slowly cooked to moist perfection in the traditional Tagine cookware of Morocco.

A simple vanilla ice cream, topped with fresh berries ended this memorable lunch.



But wait! There was more! Under a tented canopy of colorful sheets on a Moroccan rug, we relaxed on pillows and bolsters. Fresh brewed coffee served in demitasse cups with plates of petit fours, provided a deliciously lazy ending to a most amazing and unexpectedly delightful afternoon in Morocco!

C'est Magnifique!

I'm giving up eating chocolate for a month. Sorry, bad punctuation. I'm giving up. Eating chocolate for a month.



Why do seagulls fly over the sea?

Because if they flew over a bay, they would be bagels.



Why does a chicken coop only have two doors? If it had four doors it would be called ... a chicken sedan.

If a poison use-by date expires, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?

Which letter is silent in the word "Scent," the S or the C?

Maybe oxygen is slowly killing you and it just takes 75 to 100 years to fully work.

Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.

The word "swims" upside-down is still "swims".

An object at rest cannot be stopped!