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OUACHITA
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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita's annual International Food Festival to highlight "East Meets West" Feb. 16

By Ali Robinson

February 5, 2016

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University's International Club and the Daniel and Betty Jo Grant Center for International Education will join together to host the 2016 International Food Festival on Tuesday, Feb. 16, at 6 p.m. in Walker Conference Center. Tickets are \$5 each and will be available for purchase at the door.

Each year, students from around the world – as well as right here in the United States – come together to create an immersive experience of their cultures for the community and student body through the medium of food. This year's theme is, "East Meets West," and with a variety of nations represented, attendees are sure to experience the flavors of many countries.

Sharon Cosh, a staff coordinator for the event and coordinator of OBU's English as a Second Language program, explains that the goal of the festival is to "showcase our wonderful international students and their cultures" and to give them the opportunity "to give back to the community which has embraced them over the years of their education."

"Students preparing the food love to share the flavors and interesting dishes that represent home to them. So many happy memories are shared in serving a taste of home with others," Cosh said. "For those attending, they have an enhanced appreciation for how different our palates are. It moves toward greater curiosity about other students' lives and opens doors for new conversations and friendships to be established."

Ian Cosh, Ouachita's vice president for community and international engagement, said that the festival "provides a unique window to view the international dimensions of Ouachita's identity."

"Food is one of the most basic and yet distinctive aspects of any national identity. The food frequently offers an insight into the climate of a country or hint at what resources are most in abundance," he added. "The food may be very spicy or bland, it may be largely vegetarian or heavily meat-based. All of these elements point to underlying aspects of the culture and make further exploration much more desirable."

"The festival grants us the opportunity to share many of our home culinary delights with the rest of the world and allows us to express our love of our home into the many creations we make," said International Club President Tristan Benzon, a sophomore history and psychology double major from Zimbabwe. "The support of Ouachita and the amount of friends that come to share this event with us is by far the greatest impact. The smiles, laughter and joy we share are a reflection of how important it is to have this festival, not only on us but those who will follow us."

The entertainment portion of the evening will feature songs and sounds from around the world. Several international students will perform the music of their homeland.

Zhianxu (Sho) Lu, a sophomore music and studio art double major from China, will perform "Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon" on piano Vanja Bogetic, a senior musical theatre major from Serbia, will

perform “Med i žaoka.” The OBU Celtic Ensemble will perform “A Fig for a Kiss/The Butterfly.” Esther Atkinson, a junior musical theatre major from Rogers, Ark., will then accompany the ensemble to perform “Dobbins’ Flowery Vale” and “Paddy McGinty’s Goat.” Moeka Fujita, a sophomore intercultural studies major from Japan, will join Lu to perform “La La Latch” and “Fake ID.”

Members of the ensemble include Tori Bateman, a senior choral music education major from Bonnerdale, Ark.; Andy Henderson, a sophomore kinesiology and leisure studies major from Royse City, Texas; and Aaron Hill, a senior English major from Benton, Ark. Assistant Professors of Music Dr. Ryan Lewis and Dr. Heather Thayer will accompany the ensemble.

The Southern Baptist Woman’s Missionary Union will host a fair-trade market again this year in the lobby of Walker Conference Center. Students are encouraged to “buy items made by artisans who are being empowered to support their families through fair-trade agreements made with missionaries around the world,” Sharon Cosh explained.

For more information about the International Food Festival, contact Sharon Cosh, staff coordinator for the event, at coshs@obu.edu or 870-245-5311.