



The **WORLD** in our street

Interview with **Ali Karabacak and Mark Jones** **Istanbul BBQ**

Ali originally lived in Northern Turkey on the Black Sea coast, he is the youngest of 3 boys. Ali studied Tourism and Hotel management but didn't get to finish college. He first started working in 1988 in Bodrum in the tourist industry and then in 1990 he joined the national service and helped build refugee camps.

After one and a half years' service he moved back to Bodrum where he started his own business running an off licence in Icmeler. After that he then went onto work with a German family in their restaurant, where he stayed until he moved to the UK. . Ali first came to the UK on holiday in 1999 but didn't move here until 2001. Although he still goes back to Turkey twice a year to visit his family. In 1999 his son Ceyhan was born in the UK but was 7 weeks premature and very poorly so Ali's partners Aunty and Uncle (Mike and Marianne) helped support the family.

Ali married an English Lady and once settled here worked in a number of different establishments working nights at TNT, which was hard work but then he got a job at the mayonnaise factory as an end of line worker, then he was promoted to operating the machines then a further promotion as Supervisor and then to Shift manager.

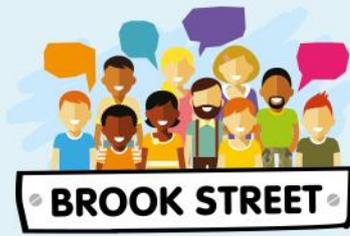
Ali had always wanted to own his own restaurant and Mike and Marianne were willing to support this if Ali could find suitable premises. A very good friend of Ali - Hamza had said that there was no Turkish restaurants in Chester so Ali decided to look for premises to open a Turkish Restaurant. They came across the premises in Brook Street and after looking through the window and seeing 6 chairs (which he really wanted to buy) he knew this was the right place. He remembers standing across the road with Marianne and thought this is the one and Marianne agreed.

Sadly Marianne never got to see the business up and running as she died on Christmas Eve 2011 unexpectedly after a routine operation.

In 2011 the property was purchased with the help of Mike and so the work began. They started stripping out the former P & A Davies bakery and came across a void behind the pizza oven they knocked most of the bricks down to find a basement which had been blocked off. In the basement were two wooden boxes full of items from Maypole Dairy's.

Mark (Mike's son) was living down in Chelmsford but returned back to Chester after his step mum (Marianne) died. He wanted to





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support his dad and also saw his return as a chance to change his own career.

Mark was born in Warrington but grew up in Chester. Mark, a very keen rugby player got a mechanical engineering degree and then went on to work for Ford Motor Company for 23 years and travelled all over the world. Mike and Ali approached Mark to see if he would like to help with the restaurant and so saw this as a new opportunity.

It took approximately 6 months to refit the shop and it opened on the 18th October 2012. Mark and Ali are co-owners of the restaurant, each having different roles. Mark deals with the admin and finance and is able to work around looking after his son as he is a single father. Ali works on the operational side to the business.

They have 4 kitchen staff and 4 waiting on staff whose nationalities are Turkish, Bulgarian, Spanish and English. Ali's son who is now 17 also helps out. Istanbul BBQ is open 7 days a week. Monday to Thursday they open from 5pm until 10pm and then at the weekend they open from noon till 10pm. They can seat a total of 98 people downstairs and upstairs and have many different nationalities visiting including Americans, Australians, Afro Caribbean's and Asians. The food is locally sourced and all the meat is Halal. The only thing they purchase from overseas are the spices which come from Turkey.

The busiest time of the week is a Saturday night but they are always busy with the prep. They have 4 different lettuces, 4 different peppers and it all takes time to prepare. On week days they will start to prepare food at about 2pm but at weekend its starts at 9am.

Istanbul BBQ sponsor shirts for the Rugby and this year they are the sponsors for the Kelsall Hill Equestrian Centre.

