

Suburb Style



Suburb Style editor, Deborah Warland talks to local residents



SUBURB SPRING

featuring Fang Akbiyik

Fang Akbiyik was born in South China in the province of Guanxi and firmly believes that the food from her area (Canton) is the best in China. She undoubtedly knows a lot about it as her family own a food export company in China, supplying spices such as chillies and cinnamon along with tinned vegetables, such as water chesnuts and bamboo shoots, to places all over the world.

When Fang was in her early twenties her parents asked her to come to the UK so that she could improve her English and then continue working for the family business, starting their European import company.

Fang started her 'English improvement' at a college in Brighton. She then carried on with her language lessons at Barnet College. It was while she was at the College that a fellow student who lived on the Suburb introduced her to our area. I asked Fang what her initial impressions of the Suburb were. "I first saw it in the springtime which is still my favourite season. Everything seemed so soft and bathed in the pink pastels of the cherry trees. I knew immediately then that I wanted to live here."

We now fast forward the tape a little. By then Fang is running the import business in Hendon when she goes to a friends' party and meets a dashing metropolitan gentleman called Altan Akbiyik. Altan's

father is Turkish (who, incidentally at 82 is still running a medical practise in Istanbul) and his mother, English. Within a year Fang and Altan are married, but during their courtship the vexed question of where to live would be a thorny one as Altan is a South of the river chap and Fang was keen to settle on the Suburb. Fortunately a happy ending ensued as Altan is bowled over by the Suburb too – "as long as it's the south side only," they agree! They have lived happily in Brunner Close for just over two years.

With Fang having been here for a while I asked whether her initial thoughts about the Suburb had changed. "Not at all. I love the architecture. When you first glance at a road or close each house may look similar, but when you get closer all the details are different, everywhere is unique. One of my favourite places is Central Square because of the churches and I enjoy the Friday lunchtime recitals at the Free Church. Altan has a job that can involve stress, so walking over the Heath Extension and on to Kenwood is ideal therapy for both us. When we get to Kenwood we can just sit and admire the view – perfect.

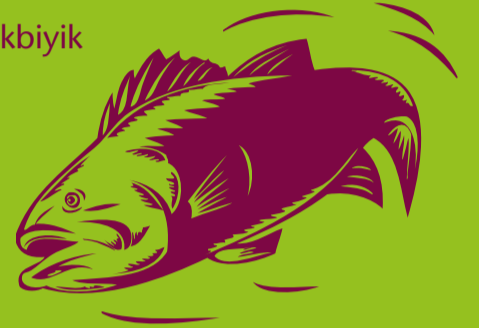
When Fang and Altan are not on the Suburb they enjoy the theatre (Fang studied Chinese Literature at University, Altan introduced her to Shakespeare here), ballet and walking in Scotland and the Lake District. Fang also loves returning to her home in China where she can taste so many of the exotic fresh fruits that she cannot find here.

Fang cooks a variety of cuisine at home and is a firm believer that for her Cantonese food, simple is often the tastiest. Here is one of her suggestions. **S**

SUBURB RECIPE by Fang Akbiyik

STEAMED GINGER SEABASS

A whole sea bass (descaled and gutted);
25gm ginger – cut into thin strips;
4 thinly sliced spring onions;
2 tblsp Shaoxing rice wine



For the sauce: 2 chopped cloves of garlic; 4 tblsp soy sauce; 2 tblsp vegetable oil;
1 small sliced red chilli; ½ tblsp lemon juice; ½ tblsp sugar

Place the fish in a steamer, put 2 of the spring onions and the ginger inside and over the fish, add the wine over the top. Put the steamer over boiling water and steam (with the lid on) for 13-15 minutes. If you have a steam oven allow the same cooking time. Remove the ginger and spring onions and add to the sauce ingredients, mix well and pour over the fish, top with the remaining finely chopped spring onions, serve piping hot.

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