

Escaping Stampede at the Calgary Turkish Festival

Cross-posted from [Calgary is Awesome](#).

I didn't go to Stampede this year.

I know, I know, how terrible of me, since there's supposed to be all this "[weird and wonderful](#)" food down at the grounds that I'm sure all of you wanted to read about - *Everybody's* been talking about the mini donut ice cream from [Mackay's Ice Cream](#); [Fiasco Gelato](#) teases me everyday with their [tweets](#) about their crepes and unique gelato flavours (Helloooo Maple Bacon, Caramel Apple, Pancakes & Maple Syrup and Root Beer Float?), and how come *no one* has reviewed the cricket pizza and alligator pizza yet?

But to be honest, aside from Stampede breakfasts (including one by the [India Canada Association of Calgary](#) serving [authentic Indian](#) food) and wearing jeans to work, there is very little that appeals to me about Stampede anymore, and with all the people who use Stampede as an excuse to be lewd and belligerent, the [animal deaths](#) every year and now [kids getting hurt on rides](#), I'm sure I'm not the only one who's becoming a little disenchanted with the "Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth".

So when I saw a banner advertising the [Calgary Turkish Festival](#), I thought it would be a nice change of pace, and having recently tried Turkish food for the first time in [Montreal](#), I was eager for more.

The fourth annual Calgary Turkish Festival was held on July 10-11 this year; in the past it had been the first weekend of July, but for some reason this year it was a little later and found itself competing with Stampede. Still, when B. and I headed out to Eau Claire Market late last Sunday, there were lots of families out, enjoying the performances and traditional costumes (and dancing in a big circle in the space in front of the stage) and the delicious and cheap food. B. and I only spent \$17 between the two of us (plus \$2 for parking, and \$8 for eight squares of baklava, which we took home) and enjoyed a veritable feast - and we didn't even get to try everything!





I loved watching the ladies knead and roll out dough to make lavash, a Turkish flatbread - some were seated behind the traditional low tables, while others were standing over more modern tables and cutting boards. At the back, more women filled the flattened dough with ingredients like feta cheese, parsley, spinach, ground beef or potatoes before they were grilled on a traditional circular griddle to make gozleme.





We had a spinach and feta gozleme (\$5), and though it was not hot off the griddle, it was still fresh and warm, with lots of air pockets and lovely charred bits. I thought they were a little skimpy with the filling, but I did appreciate how the lavash still stayed quite soft, unlike what I had in Montreal, which hardened quickly as it cooled.

B. spent \$10 on a bunch of sides - they were not priced that way on the poster, but I think the ladies at the booth just gave him smaller portions and cut him a bit of a deal for trying everything!



We had borek, which I also had in Montreal, but I was quite disappointed by this one as the layers were more like lasagna instead of thin like phyllo pastry, and didn't taste good cold (the way it was

served). However, they were quickly redeemed by the "spring rolls", which were crispy and flaky, and had a soft, warm, savoury filling of feta cheese and potatoes. ([Wikipedia](#) later told me they are actually called "sigara boregi", which roughly translates to cigarette-shaped borek).



We also had sarma, which were grape leaves stuffed with a tomato rice mixture and rolled into a cigarette shape. I was pleasantly surprised by the flavourful rice, but wished that the sarma was served hot.



My favourite dish we had was the manti, which are like little tortellinis served in a warm garlic yogurt

sauce topped with olive oil, red pepper flakes, and dried parsley. This was very filling even though it was advertised as a side dish!

We were already stuffed from all the "appies", so we didn't get to try their main dishes, which included beef or chicken doner, sujuk kofte (which looked like a meatball sandwich) and tantuni (advertised as a "turkish taco" - meat with lettuce and tomato wrapped in a flatbread). We also didn't try any turkish coffee or tea, which are notorious for being very strong. (We had \$2 ginger ale instead.) However, we did pick up some baklava for the road. I'm so glad B. talked me into getting eight pieces, so we had dessert for two nights.

Despite being sticky with honey, the thin layers of phyllo stayed crisp and flaky and the baklava tasted very light, with just a touch of nut and rosewater flavours.

For those of you who aren't as food-oriented as me, there were non-food vendors selling traditional arts and crafts and beautiful scarves, as well as booths where you can get henna done or have your name written on a grain of rice. Throughout the day, there are traditional Turkish dancing and singing performances by local and international performers, as well as time for people to just get up and dance! I would've loved to dance off everything I ate that day, but unfortunately we were in a rush to run a few errands, and B. is not a dancer :(

[Calgary Turkish Festival](#)

Held every year during the first or second weekend of July at Eau Claire Market (200 Barclay Parade SW, Calgary AB)
This year it was held on July 10-11, 9 AM-9 PM.

