



CIRCLE OF LIFE. Tilapia are seen in a fish tank in the town of Mosel near Haven, Wisconsin, in this June 29, 2017 file photo. Tilapia and tomatoes are being farmed in a sprawling greenhouse in the northern Nevada desert. The Reno Gazette-Journal reports that Dayton Valley Aquaponics uses a circle-of-life system on land where cattle used to graze to grow tomatoes using waste nutrients from the fish while leaving cleansed water to be recycled back to tilapia tanks. The company is the only one of its kind in Nevada using aquaponics to blend aquaculture, or raising fish, with hydroponics, or growing plants in water. (Gary C. Klein/The Post-Crescent via AP, File)

Tomatoes, tilapia farmed in circle-of-life Nevada greenhouse

RENO, Nev. (AP) — In a sprawling greenhouse in the northern Nevada desert, tilapia and tomatoes are being farmed in a circle-of-life partnership.

The Reno Gazette-Journal reports that Dayton Valley Aquaponics uses a super-market-sized building on land where cattle used to graze to grow tomatoes using fish waste nutrients while leaving cleansed water to recycle back to tilapia tanks.

“There’s more dissolved oxygen when there’s more water clarity, and that equals more (beneficial) omega-3 fatty acids in the fish,” said Trevor Birba, company founder and business manager. “It’s part of managing the livestock well and humanely.”

The company is the only one of its kind in Nevada blending aquaculture, or raising fish, with hydroponics, or growing plants in water, the newspaper said.

Pairing tilapia and tomatoes might seem offbeat, even bizarre, in a place with low rainfall, scouring winds, roasting summers, and winter snows that can persist into June.

But Birba called the environment ideal.

“We get over 300 days a year of good strong sun,” Birba said. “Even in the controlled environment of the greenhouse, 90 percent of the light still comes from the sun directly. Nothing does the job as well as the sun.”

Birba, who is in his early 30s, started experimenting with aquaponics about a decade ago while studying agricultural economics at the University of Nevada, Reno.

He met an investor in 2014 with some agricultural land southeast of Virginia City, and Dayton Valley Aquaponics opened in 2015.

Beyond the tilapia tanks, several varieties of cherry tomato and slicing tomatoes grow in beds of local gravel “that mimic the characteristics of high quality soil,” said Mark Warrell, company production manager.

The plants shimmy up nylon trellises, reaching seven feet high. Chilis, cucumbers, and greens fill spaces in between.

Thousands of Egyptian-breed tilapia fill a dozen tanks graded by size from newly introduced fry to fish ready for harvest at two pounds (0.9 kilograms).

The Egyptian variety is native to an arid climate like the high desert of Nevada and has firm flesh, said David Holman, executive chef at Campo restaurant in Reno.

“It has real flavor,” Holman said. “It’s not like all the tilapia that has given the fish a bad reputation.”

Special energy-efficient lights manufactured in Reno emit light from red and blue ends of the spectrum that plants use in photosynthesis. When the lights glow blue, they ward off soft-bodied pests like aphids and white flies.

The greenhouse shields the plants from harsh weather and is powered by solar panels and biofuel boilers using recycled wood pellets.

Warrell said the growing cycle uses less water than traditional farms to produce about 100,000 pounds (45,360 kilograms) of tomatoes, 30,000 pounds (13,600 kilograms) of tilapia, and 20,000 pounds (9,000 kilograms) of produce like chilis and cucumbers.

The produce is sold locally to restaurants and in natural foods stores and farmers markets.

The bulk of the tilapia is sold live to Asian markets in Northern California and to Sierra Gold Seafood in Sparks.

Gerber’s 2019 spokesbaby is a Hmong girl in North Carolina

HICKORY, N.C. (AP) — Gerber says its newest spokesbaby is a spunky one-year-old with “the look of wonder in her eyes,” born to a Hmong immigrant family in North Carolina.

The company announced that the winner of its ninth annual photo search is one-year-old Kairi Yang, a little girl from Hickory who sometimes makes a cute “growling” sound when she gets excited.

Her parents explained on NBC’s “Today Show” that she’s part of an extended family that emigrated from southeast Asia. Kairi will play a key role in Gerber’s social-media campaign as the face of the year. Her family will also receive \$50,000.



BEAUTIFUL BABY. This undated photo provided by Gerber shows Kairi Yang from Hickory, North Carolina. Kairi was chosen by Gerber as the winner of its ninth annual photo search. In an interview on NBC’s “Today Show,” Kairi’s parents said they are Hmong and their family immigrated to North Carolina from southeast Asia. (Photo courtesy of the Yang Family/Gerber via AP)

Gerber’s contest made headlines last year when two-year-old Lucas Warren became the first spokesbaby with Down syndrome. This year’s contest attracted a record 544,000 entries.

Metro-area women unite to commemorate “World Hijab Day”

By Carla Hinton
The Oklahoman

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A few sparkled with metallic accents.

The traditional head scarves worn by Muslim women took center stage at several events observing “World Hijab Day” recently in the metro area. Women gathered at the Aloft Hotel for a “World Hijab Day” dinner and program hosted by the Council on American Islamic Relations - Oklahoma (CAIR-OK) chapter. The special day also was celebrated at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), where members of the Muslim Student Association set up a “World Hijab Day” booth.

Natasha Saya, CAIR-OK’s community outreach coordinator, said she created the special dinner because she organized “World Hijab Day” activities as a student at the University of Oklahoma. This year, she wanted to observe the day in another setting.

“I thought it would be really important to support Muslim women because Muslim women, they wear their religion on their sleeve,” told *The Oklahoman*. “They face discrimination that men don’t because they wear that scarf.”

Veronica Soltani, wife of Adam Soltani, CAIR-OK’s executive director, said nearly 30 percent of anti-Muslim bias incidents in Oklahoma were triggered by a *hijab*, according to statistics compiled by CAIR-OK.

Saya said another reason for the celebration was to bring Muslim women together with women of other faiths to support one another. About 140 women attended CAIR-OK’s event. The gathering drew mostly Muslim women, but there were numerous women of other faiths in the crowd.

Mauree Turner of Oklahoma City said she considered her turban a type of hijab because hijab in Arabic means covering. She said it helps to symbolize her Muslim faith. She was excited to take part in the celebration because it was important for women to get together in “community,” she said.

“I think events like this are very important because we can encourage each other,” Turner said. “For Muslim women, you get to be in a room with people who look like you, and for those who are not Muslim, they get to learn how to be an ally.”

Janie Kirt Morris, a Christian who attends an Episcopal church, sat at Khan’s table. She said she was enjoying the



HONORING THE HIJAB. Jenin Salus laughs before taking photos of friends during an event celebrating “World Hijab Day” at the Aloft hotel in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The evening was hosted by the Council on American Islamic Relations - Oklahoma (CAIR-OK) chapter. (Sarah Phipps/The Oklahoman via AP)

celebration of women in the community.

“The whole idea of empowering women is terrific. It’s important to encourage each other,” Morris said.

The event’s keynote speaker, Melanie Elturk, said that is what she planned to do — support and encourage the crowd. As founder and chief executive officer of New York-based Haute Hijab, Elturk said she wanted to talk more about what the hijab represents — faith — more than the head covering itself.

“When we wear this hijab day in and day out, we have to know who we are and to be ready to answer and be recognized as women of faith,” she said.

She said in society, the No. 1 reason people cite for wearing the hijab is for modesty. But she said the foundation behind the hijab is that it shows that the wearer is a proud member of the Islamic faith community.

The Muslim Student Association members at UCO moved forward with another goal of World Hijab Day: discussing stereotypes and myths about the hijab and educating non-Muslims about them.

The group’s booth set up outside the Nigh Center food court recently seemed to focus on the day’s motto: “Breaking Stereotypes. Shattering Boundaries.”

The association’s president, Ashley Salim, said the students specifically wanted to raise awareness about what the hijab is and why Muslim women wear it. The UCO senior said she does not wear the traditional head scarf but supports women who do. Another member who wears a hijab, junior Oswah Cheema, said she wanted to assist at the booth to help dispel

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TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA



■ Polo

Polo’s “Talking Story” column will return soon.

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