

DAR KENZA: A LOVE STORY ETCHED IN THE HEART OF THE MEDINA

In the winding alleys of the Medina, where history whispers through the ochre walls, there lies a house unlike any other. A sanctuary of warmth, a home with a heartbeat—Dar Kenza. This is not just a guesthouse; it is a love letter, a legacy, a piece of a man's soul carefully preserved by the woman who loved him. Dhouha Belhadj Ounallah stands at its helm, carrying both the weight of loss and the lightness of memory. A mother of three, a woman of many trades, she found herself in the world of hospitality not by design, but by destiny—woven into the fabric of her life by her late husband, Lotfi Ounallah. "Every tourist must feel they've visited a truly unique place," Dhouha insists.



A DREAM BORN FROM LOVE

Lotfi was an artist, a painter, a soul deeply enamored with the Medina's spirit. Born and raised in its labyrinthine streets, he knew its secrets, its corners, its soul. When he and Dhouha moved into their home in the Medina, hosting guests was not a business—it was a habit, a joy, a ritual. Friends, travelers, and strangers alike found themselves welcomed, fed, and embraced within their walls.

Dar Kenza was born out of that love for hosting. Named after their daughter, the house became a living entity, opening its doors in 2014 to anyone seeking to touch the soul of Tunis. To this day, the warmth that first resided in their hearts continues to fill the air of this home.

"I love hosting people," Dhouha says with a warm smile. Her joy lies in cooking traditional meals, sharing her culture, and watching visitors fall in love with Tunisia's heart—the Medina. Through her meals, storytelling, and unrelenting hospitality, she has turned Dar Kenza into more than just a place to stay—it's an experience, an immersion into Tunisian life.

THE SOUL OF THE MEDINA

For Dhouha, the Medina is not just a location—it is a living, breathing entity that she holds close to her heart. Lotfi's passion for its heritage, from the towering mosque of El Zitouna to the vibrant spices of Souk El Blat, now flows through her veins. Every guest who steps into Dar Kenza is not just offered a bed but is immersed in the Medina's story. "You cannot visit without feeling its pulse," she insists.

With every morning comes a traditional Tunisian brunch, offered freely as an invitation into her world. With every evening, stories are whispered over rooftops, with the Medina sprawling below like an ancient mosaic. Tourists leave not as visitors, but as pieces of the city's eternal memory.



A BRIDGE BETWEEN WORLDS

Dar Kenza stands as a beacon, bridging the past and present, tradition and modernity, locals and travelers. Collaborating with artisans and organizations like GIZ, it supports local craftsmanship and enriches guests' experiences. For artists, researchers, and tourists, Dar Kenza offers not just hospitality but inspiration—a chance to connect with the Medina's soul.

MORE THAN A GUESTHOUSE, A LEGACY

The world of hospitality is changing. Travelers now crave authenticity, connection, a sense of belonging. Modern hotels cannot offer what Dar Kenza does—a story to become a part of. “Tourists don’t just want to eat and sleep anymore,” Dhouha explains. “They want to live. They want to feel.”

And so, Dar Kenza offers them life. It offers them love, history, tradition, and the unwavering strength of a woman who turned loss into a living legacy.

For Dhouha, this place is more than a home. It is her sanctuary, her battlefield, her solace.

“Dar Kenza is my comfort,” she says.

And for all who step through its doors, it becomes theirs too.

AN ARTIST’S TOUCH, A WIFE’S DEVOTION

Every corner of Dar Kenza carries Lotfi’s imprint. His paintings adorn the walls, each stroke breathing life into the house. The carpets, the pottery, the furniture—each piece tells a tale of Matmata, his hometown. It is as if, in some magical way, he never truly left.

“Every spot here has a story,” Dhouha says, her voice both tender and strong. “This house is not just walls and a roof—it is love, it is family, it is Lotfi.”

And so, she fights. She fights to keep Dar Kenza alive, to preserve its essence, to ensure that her husband’s dream does not fade into time. It is more than a business; it is a promise.



DAR KENZA AND MDINTI: A PARTNERSHIP OF PASSION

Beyond the walls of Dar Kenza, Dhouha has found another home—a community that shares her passion for preserving the Medina’s soul. As one of the founders of Mdinti, she has embraced the collective vision of keeping the Medina alive, vibrant, and dynamic.

Her involvement in Mdinti has offered her more than just a network; it has been a source of growth, learning, and collaboration. Through its meetings, discussions, and projects, she has learned the art of resilience, the importance of consistency, and the strength of unity.

Through Mdinti, Dar Kenza has forged valuable collaborations, such as the partnership with GIZ, which has significantly contributed to the guesthouse’s growth. The platform has not only provided visibility but has also reinforced Dar Kenza’s mission—to celebrate and share the beauty of the Medina with the world.

“Mdinti teaches you to keep moving forward, no matter the hardships,” Dhouha says. “It keeps you active, connected, and constantly inspired.”

And as the Medina breathes through its history, its people, and its traditions, so does Dar Kenza, standing as a beacon of warmth, heritage, and unwavering love