

Fredericton DJ serving up a menu for Cohen

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A Fredericton restaurateur has spun his way into catering for Leonard Cohen and his crew while the singer-songwriter tours the Maritimes.

Naz Ali travels North America spinning records in clubs and concert halls when he isn't operating his restaurant, Caribbean Flavas, in Fredericton.

Also known at DJ Nasty Naz, Ali's job in the music industry has led him to rub elbows in L.A. and Miami with some big stars.

"The light bulb went off in my head and I thought, I can cater and chef and DJ at the same time, so that is what I would do," Ali said. "I would DJ during the concert and as soon as the concert is done, I would throw back on my jacket and start cooking up a storm for these artists."

Ali started catering for the stars about three years ago and his clients have included Snoop Dogg, Akon and the Pussycat Dolls, as well as Canadians the Trews, Hedley and Bedouin Soundclash.

Ali was recently asked to make lunch one day while Cohen and his crew were performing in Fredericton.

The musician liked the food, and a single meal led to several others, Ali said.

"By the third day he is in love with the food, his entire crew loves the food and he makes a joke to ... his tour manager, 'We should take Naz and his family on tour with us,'" Ali said.

The request was no joke, and on Monday, Ali packed up his dishes, cutlery and Cohen's favourite ingredients to travel to Moncton with the crew.

Cohen, a Montreal-born singer, songwriter, poet and novelist, was inducted into the U.S. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in March, and the day after the New York gala announced he would be embarking on a tour, including major stops such as three days prior to the Montreal International Jazz Festival (June 23-25), four dates in Toronto (June 6-9) and a headline slot at Glastonbury Festival in the United Kingdom (June 29).

It is Cohen's first string of concert dates in 15 years, and includes many smaller, more intimate performance dates in Atlantic Canada, Ontario and Quebec.

Ali said he hasn't yet been asked to stay on tour with the musician but he's prepared to serve as Cohen's personal chef for as long as he's needed.

For now, he's adding a photograph of Cohen and an autographed menu to his restaurant's walls, which are already plastered with images of celebrities.