

## The Place and Importance of Turkish Cuisine in the World

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### ABSTRACT

One of the most defining features of Turkish cuisine, which is one of the most delicious cuisines in the world with its deep-rooted history of thousands of years, is the diversity of our country arising from its unique location. Turkey is a country of intense interest to tourists not only with its unique nature and seas, but also with its gastronomic riches. In the face of this interest, Turkey promises tourists not only a beautiful holiday, but also an unforgettable feast with the traditional delicacies it offers. Travelers who share their experiences with their surroundings increase the curiosity and interest in Turkey. This shows how important the delicious dishes of traditional Turkish cuisine are. In this study, the place and importance of Turkish cuisine in the world and researches on Turkish Cuisine from past to present are included.


### INTRODUCTION

Especially Istanbul cuisine occupies a very special position as it carries traces from all over the world and stands out with its unique tastes approved by many gastronomy experts. Reminding that food and beverages have not only a name and taste, but also a history, Turkish cuisine offers the relationship of the tourism sector with culinary culture by blending it in the most delicious way.

### Turkish Cuisine from Past to Present

Although it is known that a significant part of Turkish cuisine was shaped during the Ottoman period, it is based on much earlier times. The historical development of Turkish cuisine is expressed by experts as follows:

- Under the influence of the nomadic culture, meat consumption has become an important part of Turkish cuisine. In addition, pastry was an important part of this cuisine in every period.
- With the settlement of Turks in Anatolia, Anatolian cereals became one of the cornerstones of Turkish dishes and began to be widely used.
- With the combination of Turks who migrated from Central Asia and Anatolian culture, delicious Seljuk cuisine emerged. Many foods such as pita and sausage, which we still consume fondly today, took their names in this period.
- During the Ottoman period, Turkish cuisine spread all over the world, and palace cuisine was among the most established cuisines in the world, as accepted by many gastronomy experts today.

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- With the Republican period, Turkish cuisine gained a modern appearance. In addition to the traditional cuisine where meat dishes are predominant, olive oil and vegetable dishes have started to be at least as prominent as traditional cuisine.
- Today, delicious dishes are made all over Turkey according to the climate of the regions and the variety of products grown, and Anatolian cereals are among the oldest and most original grains in the world.

Although Turkish cuisine is a cuisine that has preserved its feature from past to present, it is on the tables today with its healthy and tastes with the richness of the food varieties and the harmony of the ingredients in the dishes. Today, food cultures, which are mixed with the effect of globalization, are losing their importance day by day. Since many people prefer fast consumption, what many people eat and drink is restricted to the products in the menus of restaurants or restaurants.

The places preferred by people who meet the need to eat outside the home are mostly near their workplaces or on holidays, near homes or by food orders taken from online environments. As a result, people have difficulty in creating food culture.

Turkish Cuisine, one of the richest cuisines in the world, "Food and beverages that provide nutrition to people living in Turkey; their preparation, cooking, preservation; the tools and techniques required for these procedures and all the practices and beliefs that develop around the eating etiquette and the kitchen" (Maviş, 2003:58).

It is stated that the fame of Turkish cuisine stems from the production of many different types and flavors of dishes with the use of a wide variety of ingredients and flavors in different ways (Sürücüoğlu & Özçelik, 2005:10).

The qualities of Turkish culinary culture can generally be grouped under the following headings (Tezcan, 2000:21; Akman, 1998:11; Baykan and Tekgül, 1993:2):

- Nomadism and agricultural economic structure,
- socio-economic level,
- being influenced by other cultures and influencing them,
- varies according to the geographical regions experienced, and
- influence of religion.

Turkish cuisine is the heir of Ottoman cuisine. This process continued among those who prepared the dishes in Turkish Cuisine. The meals prepared both in the palaces and in the areas where the people ate were prepared by certain people in a certain order (Kazan, 2003). In addition to the influence of world cuisines, indigenous factors belonging to societies themselves, globalization and a number of social and sociological events have also played a role.

The emergence of the urban phenomenon as a result of the industrial revolution, the French revolution and the related political and social change in social life, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The great wars of centuries and the great migrations caused by them, all of these are the most fundamental sociological events shaping today's world cuisines.

In addition, with the development of communication and transportation, the relationship between societies belonging to different cultures is more than ever. As a result, interest in the food culture of the east increased in industrialized western countries. In these countries, restaurants producing Chinese, Indian and Japanese dishes are multiplying like mushrooms (Baysal, 2003). Even between regions in a country, the taste and culinary culture change. It is inevitable that there will be differences in taste,

preparation and culinary culture between countries or nations. In addition to these differences, there are pizzas all over the world as pizza and it is known that there are Italians. The elephant minion of the French is prepared in the same way all over the world. The shish kebab of the Turks is loved by every tourist who comes to our country (Gümüş, 2011).

The cultural values carried by societies are as effective in eating and drinking habits as they are in the lives of those societies (Kızıldemir, Öztürk and Sarıışık, 2014: 196). When the Turkish culinary culture is examined, the historical process of the Turks from Central Asia dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries to the present day is seen. Factors such as the variety of products offered by Asian and Anatolian lands, the interaction with other cultures throughout history, the presence of newly developed tastes in the Seljuk and Ottoman palaces, and the presence of Anatolian cuisine originating from Mesopotamia are the elements that ensure the colorfulness and diversity of Turkish cuisine. Turkish Culinary culture, which is based on the nomadic culture and the Anatolian, Seljuk and Ottoman past, has developed and matured until today (Güler, 2010: 24-25).

When the national literature is examined, it is stated that Turkish cuisine is among the top 3 richest cuisines of the world together with Chinese and French cuisines (Şanlıer, 2005: 214; Çakıcı and Eser, 2016: 216; Kızıldemir, Öztürk and Sarıışık, 2014: 206; Ertaş and Karadağ, 2013: 117). The aim of this study, which is prepared based on these comments defended about the place of Turkish cuisine in world cuisines, is to give information about the history and diversity of Turkish cuisine and to determine its importance and place among world cuisines.

### **An Overview of Turkish Cuisine**

Factors such as the variety of products offered by Asian and Anatolian lands, the interaction with other cultures throughout history, the presence of newly developed tastes in the Seljuk and Ottoman palaces, and the existence of Anatolian cuisine originating from Mesopotamia are the factors that ensure the colorfulness and diversity of Turkish cuisine (Önçel, 2015: 34, Güler, 2010: 24-25). The main food of the ancient Turks were mutton and dairy products. The sheep were followed by goats and cattle, respectively, and these animals were also used for milk production. In the Turkish table, milk is consumed alone and shows a wide variety of dairy products such as butter, precipitate, cheese, yogurt, ayran and milk, yogurt dishes and desserts (Güler, 2010: 25).

The use of meat and fermented dairy products by the nomadic people of Central Asia, the cereals of Mesopotamia, the vegetables and fruits of the Mediterranean and its surroundings together with the spices of South Asia were effective in the enrichment of Turkish food culture (Önçel, 2015: 34).

When it comes to Turkish cuisine, of course, the first thing that comes to mind is the Ottoman Palace Cuisine. Because the foundations of Turkish cuisine date back to the Ottoman period. Both the traditional tastes from the palace cuisine to the present day and the feast created by different tastes unique to all regions of Turkey are the signature of this cuisine and therefore it is among the richest cuisines in the world. In Seljuk cuisine, along with the Islamic understanding, there is a restriction and simplicity brought about by the use of traditional foodstuffs and the avoidance of waste. The Seljuk culinary culture was enriched by passing through the selective sieve of Islam both the traditions it had and the advantages that Anatolia had brought to them by the Anatolia to which it migrated. As a continuation of the nomadic tradition, meat, milk and dairy products, which have been widely consumed among the Turks since time immemorial, as well as grain and bakery products, dishes obtained from different kinds of vegetables, very rich fruit culture, desserts, sorbets, pickles constitute the main ingredients of the cuisine of the period (Kızıldemir, Öztürk and Sarıışık, 2014: 196). The Ottoman period was undoubtedly the centuries in which Turkish culinary culture reached a great richness (Gürsoy, 2013: 89).

The dominance of the Ottoman Empire over a wide geography and the introduction of different cultures as a result contributed to the development of Turkish cuisine in this period (Güler, 2010: 25).

Özdemir and Kınay (2006) conducted a study on the opinions of foreign visitors on Turkish Cuisine. As a result of the research, it was concluded that tourists generally have positive opinions about Turkish cuisine, but the fact that Turkish food is too oily, tomato paste and spicy, and heavy desserts are among the negatives.

In their study Kızıldemir, Öztürk and Sarıışık (2014), they conducted research on the changes in the historical development of Turkish culinary culture. As a result of the research, it was determined that the cultural richness of the Turks was effective in the enrichment of the Turkish culinary culture.

### Products Brought by Turks to World Gastronomy

When it comes to Turkish cuisine in the world, the first things that come to mind are doner, Turkish delight or baklava. These unique tastes of Turkish-Ottoman cuisine have come out of the lands we live in and have spread all over the world as the dishes and products of our cuisine. When it comes to Döner, Turks come to mind, except for a few small national disputes. Likewise, Turkish delight is known as "Turkish Delight" on its name. Baklava is also one of our nationalized flavors. In addition, we have products that Turks have discovered but other nations have embraced.

### Yogurt from Central Asia

The most famous of these is known as yogurt. The yogurt, which our ancestors who lived nomads in Central Asia discovered by chance while hiding milk, is spreading to the kitchens of western civilizations with the migration of the Turks to Anatolia. It takes its place in the kitchens of many nations that the Ottomans added to their lands. Just as there are nations that consume with food like the Turks and drink it as a drink like buttermilk, especially in Europe and America, it has been mixed with fruit and started to be consumed in the form of ice cream. Our national food is spreading rapidly all over the world, but it is not us who embrace yoghurt, but the Greeks who introduce it as Greek yogurt.

Even the country's largest yogurt producer, whose founder is Turkish in America, has Greek Yoghurt summer on its packages, not Turkish. The Greeks introduce the yogurt they learned from the Ottomans in America. One of the most important reasons for this is that there is a dense Greek population in America (Kara, 2019).

### Phases of Turkish Cuisine

The phases of Turkish cuisine in the historical process differ in a wide variety of sources. It is divided into sub-branches in shapes. In general, as in Figure 1 It is observed that it is divided into two as before Islam and after Islam.

| Turkish Cuisine      |                                    |                |              |                              |           |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------------------------|-----------|
| Pre-Islamic          |                                    | Post-Islamic   |              |                              |           |
| Central Asia Cuisine | Principalities and Seljuks Cuisine | Ottoman        |              | Republican Era               |           |
|                      |                                    | Palace Cuisine | Folk Cuisine | Traditional Alaturka Cuisine | Alafranga |

**Figure 1.** Phases of Turkish Cuisine.

Source: Ed. Alev Dündar Arıkan. "Turkish Culinary Culture". Eskişehir: Compiled from Anadolu University Press.

With the adoption of Islam, the meat of single-clawed animals such as pork, donkeys and mules, which are forbidden by Islam in Turkish cuisine, and the meat of animals such as reptiles and foxes were not included in the meals (Ertaş & Gezmen, 2013).

The fact that Islam allowed the consumption of fish varieties and did not allow the consumption of the meat of living creatures such as crabs, mussels, lobsters and frogs from other seafood caused the Ottoman cuisine to be formed in this direction (Bucak & Taşpınar, 2014).

The use of abundant spices and bitters, which are in the Arab nutrition culture along with the Islamic religion, has also shown itself in Turkish food. After the Turks settled in Anatolia, the meat-based cuisine from Central Asia and the local Anatolian cuisines interacted with each other over time. With the Ottoman Empire having a wide geography, the foods specific to the north, south, east and west and the influence of the Middle Eastern, Roman, European (French and Italian) cuisines on Turkish Cuisine have created the richness of Anatolian cuisine (Ertaş and Gezmen, 2013).

**Table 1.** Countries Shown Among the World's Best Cuisines on Websites

| Website                              | Countries / Regions  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| yonderbound.com (best 20 countries)  | Vietnam, Greece, Italy, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Japan, Ukraine, China, India, Spain, France, Mexico, Switzerland, Portugal, Korea, Sweden, Montenegro, Australia, America   |
| roughguides.com (best 15 countries)  | Malaysia, Lebanon, United Kingdom, Turkey (ranked 12th), Spain, Singapore, Mexico, Indonesia, France, China, Vietnam, Japan, India, Thailand, Italy  |
| bbcgoodfood.com                      | America, UK, Caribbean, China, France, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Mediterranean, Mexico, Morocco, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam   |
| quora.com                            | France, Japan, China, India, Italy, Thailand, Mexico, America, Korea, Spain  |
| top10base.com (top 10) country)      | China, Italy, Thailand, India, France, Spain, Mexico, Australia, Japan, Lebanon  |
| thetoptens.com (top 10) country)     | Italy, Mexico, India, France, Japan, China, America, Thailand, Spain, Greece   |
| ranker.com (top 50 country)          | Italy, France, India, Spain, Japan, Greece, Mexico, Thailand, China, Germany, Vietnam, America, Lebanon, Scotland, Turkey (ranked 15th), Portugal, Russia, South Korea, Wales, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, United Kingdom (United Kingdom), Hong Kong, Iran, Morocco, Argentina, Hungary, Guadeloupe, Peru, Austria, Ireland, Brazil, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Philippines, Chile, Spain (Catalonia), Israel, Laos, Denmark, Sweden, Ukraine, Cambodia, Slovakia, Australia, Cyprus, New Zealand, Monaco |
| travel.cnn.com (top 10) country)     | America, Mexico, Thailand, Greece, India, Japan, Spain, France, China, Italy   |
| edition.cnn.com (top 10) country)    | Taiwan, Philippines, Italy, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, Greece, Vietnam   |
| topyaps.com (top 10) country)        | Indonesia, Mexico, China, Italy, Spain, France, Japan, Turkey (3rd place), India, Thailand   |
| usnews.com (top 10) country)         | Italy, Spain, France, Mexico, Greece, Thailand, Portugal, India, Argentina, Turkey (ranked 10 <sup>th</sup> )  |
| listamaze.com (top 10) country)      | America, China, Thailand, Japan, India, Turkey (5th place), Spain, Mexico, Italy, France   |
| lonelyplanet.com (best 10 countries) | Thailand, Greece, China, France, Spain, Mexico, Italy, India, Japan, Indonesia /Malaysia   |
| thrillist.com (top 27 country)       | Iceland, Poland, Ireland, Belgium, Egypt, Greece, Denmark, Philippines, Mexico, Colombia, Ethiopia, South Korea, France, China, United Kingdom, Brazil, Thailand, Israel, Japan, Germany, Austria,   |



|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | Venezuela, Vietnam, Turkey (4th place), Italy, America, Canada  |
| listwoo.com (top 10) country) | India, Italy, China, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey (6th place), Greece, Japan, Lebanon, Spain  |
| bbc.co.uk                     | Portugal, Africa, Americas, UK, Caribbean, China, Eastern Europe, France, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Scandinavian countries, North Africa, Portugal, South America, Spain, Thailand and Southeast Asia, Turkey and the Middle East |

### Turkish Cuisine of Central Asia

In this period when the equestrian nomadic culture was dominant, the first foods of the Turks were the products produced from wheat and milk such as flour and yogurt, and the meat of animals such as horses and sheep, which they also used for mounts, their first drinks; and it consisted of kimize (a fermented drink prepared from mare's milk). In addition, vinegar, molasses and wine they made from grapes were also consumed by Turks during this period (Kızıldemir and Sarıışık, 2017). In Turkish cuisine, milk has also been consumed by making dairy products such as fat, cheese, yogurt, ayran, precipitate and making a yogurt meal with milk or using it in milk dessert (Güler, 2010).

In the Seljuk period, as in other periods, the Turks gave great importance to kitchen tools and utensils in culinary culture. As a result of various research, it has been determined that Turks used kitchen utensils such as sahan, testicle, bowl and sini during food service during this period. Figure 2 and Figure 3 give examples of kitchen tools and utensils used in this period.



**Figure 2.** Seljuk Period Sunu-Sini

*Source: [www.turkbilimi.com](http://www.turkbilimi.com)*

With the spread and growth of the Ottoman Empire over a wide geographical area, Turkish cuisine also showed a solid development. In the Ottomans, the kitchen was very valuable for palace life. The Sultan adopted gathering around a table as a means of socialization, and therefore it became a place where delicious and rich dishes were produced, open to continuous innovations (Güler, 2010).

The fact that the Ottoman Empire was adjacent to the Aegean Sea, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea led to the formation of marine culture in Turkish cuisine. Among the fish varieties, bluefish, anchovies, sea bass, sea bream, mackerel and bonito are indispensable seafood products of Turkish cuisine (Bucak & Taşpınar, 2014).

Reasons for the richness of Turkish cuisine; The abundance and diversity of food and beverage raw material resources and the fact that the Turkish nation has a deep-rooted history. Turks have been neighbors with a wide variety of nations since the early ages, lived together and exchanged information about the culture of eating. As a result, Turkish cuisine has formed today's culinary culture with a tremendous cultural accumulation.

The use of vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, fresh peppers and zucchini, which are included in today's Turkish Culinary culture and which are very popular in the kitchen, was achieved with the discovery of the American continent. With the inclusion of these foods in Turkish culinary culture, their use has reached as far as Anatolia (Samancı & Croxford, 2016).

### **Let's Focus on Turkish Cuisine and World Cuisine**

Turkish cuisine is a very colorful and diverse cuisine. Reasons for this: The Turkish nation is one of the oldest societies in the world. Since it was nomadic, it interacted with many nations and lived in many geographies. It was influenced by the Anatolian cuisine in Mesopotamia, which is considered the beginning of culinary culture.

Turkish cuisine has influenced and influenced both Balkan and Middle Eastern cuisines. In addition, Turkish cuisine varies according to regions. Many regions such as Black Sea cuisine, Southeastern cuisine, Central Anatolian cuisine, Aegean Cuisine have a rich food content of their own.

### **Main Dishes in Turkish Cuisine**

**Soups:** Soup is an indispensable part of Turkish cuisine. Nowadays it is common to drink soup even at breakfast. Lentil soup, ezogelin soup, yogurt soup and tarhana soup are the most preferred soups. However, Turkish cuisine also contains countless amounts of soups. Meats, vegetables and legumes are often the main ingredients of soups. Broths, flour, yogurt and noodles are used to turn these ingredients into soups.

**Meat Dishes:** Meat dishes in Turkish cuisine are flips, roasts, grills, pan dishes, roasts, grilled kebabs, pot kebabs, stews, sahan dishes, steams, closures, boils, meatballs, stuffed meat and fruity meat dishes. There are also many fish, chicken and offal dishes available in Turkish cuisine.

**Vegetable Dishes:** Turkish cuisine is a cuisine with a great variety in terms of vegetable dishes. There are countless varieties of stuffing and wraps, vegetable dishes with meat, frying vegetables and olive oils. Among the vegetables in Turkish cuisine, eggplant is of particular importance. Although eggplant is eaten in many countries of the world as a vegetable in terms of diversity, it cannot be considered an exaggeration to count Turkish cuisine as the cuisine with the most eggplant dishes in the world.

**Pastry:** Lahmacun, bread with meat, pita, ravioli and pastries are among the most popular pastries of Turkish cuisine. In addition, when rice and pasta are added to this class, a wide variety emerges.

**Drinks:** In addition to carbonated drinks and fruit juices that are loved all over the world, there are also unique drinks of Turkish cuisine. Buttermilk made by diluting yogurt is a drink completely unique to Turks. Apart from this, boza, kefir, turnip juice and sherbet are also among the unique cold drinks of the Turks. Among the hot drinks, Turkish coffee and Turkish tea occupy a special place.

**Desserts:** Turkish desserts show a wide variety of doughy desserts such as baklava, kadayıf, lokma, milk desserts such as custard, keşkül, kazandibi, rice pudding, hossafs and compotes, revani, halva, ashura and zucchini desserts have a wide range.

### **Behavior Patterns**

Food offerings in Turks are a measure of hospitality. Guests are important people and the guest is not defective in catering. The tradition of giving cakes, pies and cookies to the guests is definitely served food. The tradition of giving cakes, pies and cookies to the tea still continues even in the cities.

### **Change in Turkish Cuisine**

There have been some changes in Turkish cuisine over time. The reasons for these changes can be listed as follows: Opening up to Western cultures, Rapid industrialization and urbanization, Increasing

employment of women Increasing literacy rate and containing foreign recipes of most cookbooks on the market Rapid population growth, habits and accordingly changing taste understanding, modernization. (Mete, 2019).

## Result

Today, some restaurants and facilities with tourism certificates include dishes they choose from Turkish cuisine in their menus. However, this is extremely inadequate and limited. No other dish is known to foreigners in the twentieth century as Turkish food other than "Şiş kebab", "Döner" and "Pilav". Turkish cuisine has not been able to reach the international place it deserves from the beginning to the present day due to reasons such as the fact that it has not been able to establish a basic education system in this regard with its full value.

Today, when the world is turning to healthy, nutritious, probiotic and functional foods with the excessive consumption of fast food and ready-to-eat foods leading to unhealthy nutrition, the value of traditional foods of Turkish culinary culture is more understood and there is a return to the past in nutritional habits. Today, the fact that Ottoman Cuisine and local foods have come to the fore again is an indication of this. The dishes specific to Turkish cuisine prepared in food and beverage establishments should be prepared in accordance with the original and without sacrificing quality, and our cultural values such as boza and Turkish coffee should be protected from our beverages as well as in terms of healthy nutrition as well as traditional aspects.

While centuries-old Turkish dishes are introduced to the world, these dishes are embraced by other nations. This situation shows that we need to protect Turkish cuisine.

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