

BAR STORIES

KNIFE-CUT

Anchovy, Potatoes, Walnut Tarator Cream, Lemon Gel

Geologically speaking, anchovies migrated to our seas from the Mediterranean after the formation of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits. Anchovy is abundant, delicious, and can be served both fresh and salty, has made it highly sought after not only in the Black Sea but also in Istanbul. Istanbulites particularly relish anchovy as an accompaniment to rakı. Evliya Çelebi, one of the most famous travelers in Turkish history, sings the praises of every fish in his book *Seyahatname* (Book of Travels), and describes anchovy as “lovely hapsi (anchovy).” In fact, the only recipe he shares in his 10-volume book is an anchovy dish, illustrating his special interest in anchovies.

Lakerda, Red Onion Cream, Fish Bouillon, Lemon Juice, Dill

In the eyes of the old Istanbulites, bonito would grow just so it could be made into lakerda by skillful hands. It is said that the best lakerda is made from the bonitos caught when northeast winds blow. As a trademark of the Bosphorus and Istanbul, lakerda is tastier than any other salted fish, and is often enjoyed by Istanbulites as a companion to rakı, alone, or with other appetizers. Served with red onions, lakerda was previously “nibbled at,” which means it is picked up from its center using the tip of the fork.

From a historical perspective, journalist Deniz Alphan explains that the origin of the word “lakerda” comes from Spanish, derived from “la kerrida,” meaning desired or craved. Lakerda, which was a staple on the tables of Sephardic Jews who began migrating from Spain to Ottoman territories in the late 1400s, was frequently prepared in Jewish households in Istanbul during years when bonito was abundant. It was served as a traditional appetizer on family tables. The dish was also special for the Rum of Istanbul, as they enjoyed lakerda on holidays and name days.*

**In the Catholic and Orthodox faith, each day of the year is commemorated with the name of a saint. People named after saints celebrate their respective name days on days designated by the churches.*

PAN-FRIED

Fried Mussels, Kale, Walnut Tarator Cream, White Bread

Mussels were cheap, nutritious seafood that was abundant in the Bosphorus. They were frequently savored by the Orthodox community in Istanbul, particularly during Lent, when the consumption of animal products was abstained from. Serving fried mussels with tarator is a time-honored Istanbul tradition. The food culture writer Sula Bozis states that aliada, skordalia, or tarator, known as such during the Ottoman era, was a popular Byzantine dish made by blending bread crumbs, garlic, pine nuts, almonds, or walnuts with olive oil. During the Ottoman period, tarator was mostly made with hazelnuts or walnuts, and the flavor was further enhanced by adding lemon or vinegar. This added flavor to fried mussels and allowed for lighter cooking.

Mini Puff Börek, Cheese, Fresh Spices

The böreks sold on the streets of Istanbul were usually made at home or in bazaar bakeries. They were baked on grills or charcoal fires, in small home ovens, or in neighborhood bakeries where trays were taken. Istanbulites frowned upon wives who served store-bought börek at the table, often accusing them of incompetence. Out of all store-bought böreks, puff börek was considered the most special.

Puff börek is a type of fincan börek made in a half-moon shape using folded dough or plain dough with eggs and oil. Made with onion stuffing and cheese or minced meat, this börek forms a light, airy crust when fried in hot oil, earning it the moniker “puff.” The first puff börek recipe was mentioned in the book *Melceü't-Tabbâhîn* (Refuge of Cooks) printed in 1844, which also refers to the popularity of puff börek. Moreover, puff börek is referred to as a “light dish” in *Aşçıbaşı* (Head Chef), a cookbook written by Mahmud Nedim bin Tosun in 1898.

Fried Manti, Tarhana Sauce, Sumac

The Turkish mantı can be traced to Central Asia and the Caucasus. The predecessor of mantı, a piece of cultural heritage shared with other societies in the surrounding region, is mentioned in the *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* (the first printed Turkish-Arabic dictionary) compiled in 1072–1074 as *tutmaç*, denoting pieces of unfilled dough. The first records of mantı in the Ottoman period date back to the rule of Mehmed the Conqueror. A favorite dish of Mehmed the Conqueror, mantı is filled with minced meat and served with yogurt to this day. Our take on this classic Ottoman recipe is fried mantı. With an innovative approach, we enriched mantı with tarhana sauce and traditionally used sumac, turning it into a delightful bar snack perfectly paired with a drink.

Albanian-Style Liver, Pickled Onion, Green Onion Cream

As one of the oldest companions to rakı, Albanian-style liver was previously called liver kebab in Istanbul, and was predominantly sold by people from Albania, Safranbolu or Karaman. Made by frying chopped liver and lungs with the addition of salt, pepper and flour, the dish has always been served with parsley and onion. Most of the liver sellers who roamed the streets of old Istanbul were Albanian, which is why the dish was soon named “Albanian-style liver.”

Fatih Pide with Cheese or Minced Meat – Eggs Optional

Etymologically, the word pide is derived from the word pita, which means “flat dough bread” in Greek, and “piece of bread” or “bite” in Aramaic. Ottoman food researcher Priscilla Mary Işın claims that pide, which was a term generally used for flatbreads during the Ottoman period, also refers to round flatbreads that are baked in the oven and topped with ingredients like cheese and spinach. According to sources, Mehmed the Conqueror was known to relish cheese and zucchini pide, occasionally complemented with eggs.

Mignon Baked Potato, Acuka, Citrus Fibers

The Ottomans’ production of potato, a vegetable from the Americas, first commenced in Alibeyköy in the 1830s. The first written recipe regarding the use of potatoes, aimed at raising awareness among the people who were unfamiliar with this vegetable, appears in the book *Melceü't-Tabbâhîn* (Refuge of Cooks) printed in 1844, describing it as “a type of ground apple known as potato.” Potatoes were cultivated and cooked in increasing quantities over time, eventually becoming a staple in Turkish cuisine. The word *kumpir*, a potato dish baked in the oven and filled with various ingredients, is likely a derivation of the Serbian word *krompira* or the Bosnian word *krompir*. This potato dish was introduced in the 1980s by Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria and soon became an iconic street food in Istanbul.

FIRE-GRILLED

Sweetbread, Tomato, Homemade Lavash, Red Onion

While offal is often overlooked in many European cuisines, Istanbul proudly showcases a cuisine that cherishes and elevates offal dishes. A favorite dish of Central Asian Turks, offal was also considered special in the Ottoman palace kitchen. Sweetbread is among the most delicate and delicious varieties of offal. Sold in the shops of Sütlüce, where the slaughterhouses of old Istanbul were located, sweetbread was also known as the pancreas or thymus gland in the Ottoman cuisine. In the spring months, when the babies of cattle and sheep that bred in the winter are weaned, the sweetbread obtained from these babies is the only offal that is in season.

Kokoreç on Bone and Thyme Mayo

The word kokoreç is etymologically derived from the Greek word “kokorétsi” and the Albanian word “kukurec.” Having conquered the streets of Istanbul in the last 60 years, kokoreç stands out as one of the most coveted late-night street delicacies for Istanbulites. Sources claim that the oldest surviving kokoreç recipe dates back to the years 1882–1883. According to Priscilla Mary Işın, lamb heart, lung and livers previously soaked in salt, pepper, thyme, and onion broth would be threaded onto a thick skewer, tightly wrapped by the intestines and intestinal fat, and cooked over the fire.

The more traditional version of kokoreç is the wrap dish made in the homes of the Rum and Armenians of Istanbul at the beginning of May. Wrap, a thin kokoreç made by braiding the intestines of freshly weaned lambs, is baked on a tray with green spring vegetables. Inspired by the different varieties of this traditional street flavor, kokoreç on bone is one of our most innovative dishes.

Taksim Mini Wet Burger, Molasses Pickle, and Kashkaval Cheese Brioche

The hamburgers with tomato paste sauce, pioneered by Kristal Büfe, have emerged as one of the most beloved late-night street foods in Istanbul, particularly in the Beyoğlu district. In their early years, these hamburgers were in high demand, prompting the need for a faster production method to keep up with orders. Bread, burger, and tomato paste sauce were swiftly assembled, with the sauce moistening the bread and blending flavors, thus giving the hamburger a fresh identity and a new name. This popular style of hamburger would become known as a “wet burger.”

Stadium Meatballs, Tirnak Pide, Mustard

In Istanbul, until the 1960s, dining out was mainly a practice embraced by commuters heading to work, solitary newcomers to the city, and students. The best places to satisfy the hunger were soup kitchens and meatball eateries. Since meatballs were less costly to make, they were sold cheaper than pot dishes. Made from the fatty parts of the animal and enriched with ingredients such as onion, parsley, bread, cumin, and black pepper, meatballs were as delicious as grilled kebabs. Small meatball eateries and street vendors would have one person who kneaded, shaped, cooked, and sold the meatballs. Furthermore, meatball sandwiches have emerged as one of the most prominent casual dining options in Istanbul. They are now among the most popular fast-food delicacies for sports fans awaiting entry to soccer stadiums.

Lamb Shish, Yedikule Lettuce, Fried Dough

Based on what is written in the *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, the first printed Turkish-Arabic dictionary, shish kebab is a meat cooking method that was first used by Central Asian Turks. Lamb shish refers to a meat dish made by threading small pieces of meat onto thin skewers, and it is believed to have originated as a kebab variety suitable for eating on the

go, with the Izmir-Aydın railway line being its first known location. The fact that kebab is a cooking technique specific to Istanbul indicates that the dish may also have originated in Istanbul. Durable oak skewers were used for shish kebab, which was prepared by cooking the meat over the fire on skewers made of iron, wood or reed. Serving as the perfect companion to your drink, we serve lamb shish with fresh Yedikule lettuce, named after the Yedikule Orchards, the 1,500-year-old urban agricultural area of Istanbul.

Sausage, Sourdough Bread, Green Pepper

For Central Asian Turks, the word “sucuk” refers to both stuffed intestines, and the dish made by stuffing the spicy minced meat mixture into the intestines. In Ottoman food culture, meat dishes were exclusively prepared with lamb, while pastrami and sucuk were produced using beef. Large numbers of cattle were transported to Istanbul and offered for sale at the cattle market established outside Yedikule. Most of the animals were sold to Armenian pastrami sellers, and the rest were sold to tradesmen called “esnaf-ı sucukçuyan” and a small number of cattle butchers. However, the most delicious pastrami and sucuk were produced in Kayseri and delivered to the palace for the enjoyment of the Sultan. During Easter, the Rum of Kayseri would send baskets filled with pastrami, sucuk, sweet yeast bread, and red Easter eggs to fellow Rum and Armenians holding influential positions in Kayseri. These delicacies were deemed indispensable for festivities.

After the 1960s, street vendors began offering sucuk sandwiches alongside meatball sandwiches. Gradually, the sucuk sandwich evolved into a delightful street food, especially cherished on chilly winter days for its warming qualities. A delightful indulgence on snowy days, sucuk sandwiches also complement a glass of wine beautifully.

Beyoğlu Chocolate

During the Ottoman period, the British first introduced chocolate to the market in 1842 with the onset of mass production that followed the First Industrial Revolution. Chocolate, which arrived in the Ottoman Empire later than in the Western world, made its debut in the 19th century. Initially, it gained popularity among the elite, particularly within the palace. Subsequently, it found its way to the public, becoming a part of everyday consumption in the modern cafes and patisseries that emerged in the Westernized neighborhoods of Istanbul. Imported chocolates were primarily available in select, prominent confectionery shops located in Beyoğlu. One of these establishments was Bon Marche, situated directly across from the Hazzopulo Passage. Predominantly available in Beyoğlu, chocolate became closely associated with this district and was subsequently promoted as a regional specialty, thus earning the name “Beyoğlu chocolate.”

Halva Sandwich

While the word halva used to be a general name for all kinds of sweet foods and confectionery, it came to indicate a specific type of dessert over time. There are two types of halva: homemade and commercially manufactured. The most popular type of manufactured halva is tahini halva. Tahini halva, just like in Istanbul, is commonly consumed as a staple dessert in various parts of Turkey. The most common method for eating tahini halva has always been to buy some from the grocery store and put it in fresh bread. Halva sandwiches used to be an ideal treat to fill up in eateries. Easy to prepare, high in calories and nutritious, halva was especially preferred by people working in physically demanding jobs and by travelers. Tahini halva was also significant in that it was enjoyed by the Orthodox community during Lent when they abstained from animal products.

Another time-honored halva tradition involves the conversations people have while consuming it. During long winter nights, people from all walks of life would come together to engage in conversation, enjoy themselves, and share halva. Our halva sandwiches are specially prepared. We hope you enjoy them alongside good company.