

BAR STORIES

KNIFE-CUT

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

Lakerda is traditionally made from mature bonito caught especially when the northeasterly wind is blowing. With a flavor far superior to all other salted fish, lakerda is one of the signature delicacies of the Bosphorus and Istanbul. It holds a cherished place on Istanbul's rakı tables, either served on its own or alongside other mezes. Typically accompanied by red onion, lakerda was traditionally eaten by gently picking up from its serving plate using the tip of a fork. The word lakerda is believed to derive from the Spanish "la kerrida," meaning "the beloved" or "the desired." It became a cultural and culinary tradition for both the Jewish communities who migrated to the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century and Rum residents of Istanbul, especially featured on festive and special occasion tables.

Sea Bass with Mayonnaise, Cucumber, Capers, Chives, Pickled Gherkins, Bread

For centuries, the fish from Istanbul's fish markets have graced the tables of Istanbul Rums, both in their fresh and salted forms, enjoyed daily and on special occasions alike, accompanied by rakı or wine. On festive days, especially for New Year's eve celebrations, some of the mezes were bought from the delicatessens of Galata and the Fish Market, while others were prepared at home. One of the indispensable homemade mezes was fish with mayonnaise, a staple of Istanbul Rums' tables. Preparing this dish required both creativity and skill. The whole fish would be poached, placed on a serving platter, its top skin peeled off, and then coated with mayonnaise. It was then decorated with pickles, carrots, parsley, and sometimes capers—turning it into one of the most striking edible artwork.



PAN-FRIED

Fish Köfte from the Bosphorus, Spicy Fish Sauce, Silver White Onion

One of the most exquisite dishes of Istanbul cuisine is fish köfte (fish balls), traditionally made with bonito, especially during the winter months. The key to this dish lies in perfectly balancing the spices and adding currants and pine nuts, just like in a classic Istanbul-style dolmas. These köftes were typically served fried and were among the tastiest offerings of Istanbul's taverns and homes. At BİZ Istanbul Bar, we reimagined the classic fish köfte and added our innovative touches.

Puf Börek, Cheese, Fresh Spices

The böreks sold on the streets of Istanbul were usually made at home or in the bakeries. Out of all bakery böreks, puf börek was considered the most special.

Puf börek is a type of cutter formed börek folded in a half-moon shape using a plain dough or dough enriched 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 its name "puf" (to puff up).

The first puf börek recipe was mentioned in the book *Melceü't-Tabbâhîn* (oldest Ottoman cookbook) printed in 1844, which also refers to the popularity of this börek. At a later date in a cookbook written by Mahmud Nedim bin Tosun in 1898, where the recipe appears, puf börek is also referred to as a “light dish.”

Crispy Manti, Buffalo's Milk Yogurt, Tomato Sauce

The history of 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 *Dîwān 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 reign of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. A favorite dish of the sultan, mantı is filled with minced meat and served with yogurt, just like its modern version. This is our take on this classic Ottoman recipe where we fried the mantı turning it into a delightful bar snack perfectly paired with a drink.

Crispy Breaded Beef Tripe, Spicy Yogurt Sauce

Tripe has held a significant place in Turkish cuisine since the era of the Central Asian Turks. Known for its layered or leafy texture, the most famous dish made from tripe is tripe soup. This soup, a staple at the table of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, gained a greater popularity during the post-Republican period, alongside the rise of Istanbul's drinking culture. Tripe contains an enzyme called pepsin, which helps ease digestion difficulties caused by food and alcohol and aids in preparing the body for rest. To take advantage of tripe's beneficial qualities, we've added it into our menu with a crispy twist, creating a flavor that perfectly complements your drink during a fun evening.

Fried Horse Mackerel from the Bosphorus

Horse mackerel, one of the most famous fish of the Istanbul Bosphorus, gets its name from the Greek word *savridion*, meaning “small fish species.” In old Istanbul, horse mackerel was traditionally consumed either fried or salted. Different sizes of horse mackerel have distinct flavors and were known by various names. According to the famous former Fish Market Manager Karekin Deveciyan, among them the “karagöz horse mackerel” was considered the most delicious and was sometimes sold at the price of bluefish. Known as a modest meze to accompany rakı in Istanbul taverns, horse mackerel is served at BİZ Istanbul Bar, prepared traditionally as a pan-fried dish for your enjoyment.



BRICK-OVEN

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 P. 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. At BİZ İstanbul's bar, we added our own touches to the traditional pide and prepared two new versions:

- *Beef Ribs and Oyster Mushroom Pide*
- *Cheese Pide, Konya Blue and Kashkaval*



FIRE-GRILLED

Lamb Kokoreç on the Bone, Thyme Mayonnaise

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 Ottoman cuisine researcher P. 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. Inspired by the different varieties of this traditional street flavor, kokoreç on bone is one of our most innovative dishes.

Mini Köfte, Pide Bread, Mild Spicy Tomato Sauce

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 their hunger were soup kitchens and “köfte” (grilled minced meat patties) shops. Made from the fatty parts of the animals and flavored with ingredients such as onion, parsley, bread, cumin, and black pepper, meatballs were as delicious as grilled kebabs while less costly to make. Small köfte shops and street vendors would have one person who kneaded, shaped, cooked, and sold the köftes. Therefore, köfte sandwiches have emerged as one of the most prominent casual and cheap dining options in Istanbul. They also became one of the most popular fast-food delicacies for sports fans awaiting entry to soccer stadiums hence the name we’ve given to this dish.

