HAS SALON STORIES

SOUP

Scorpionfish Soup

The Turkish word for *“soup”*, *“çorba”*, derives from the Farsi term *“shor bag”*, meaning *“salty food”*. Soup has been the traditional nourishing fare in Istanbul all through its history. Soup was valued by people of all segments of life–from the Sultan to the masses–because of its versatility in using different ingredients, therefore it has maintained its importance as a food choice that can be consumed during all meals, including breakfast. In his journals, Dernschwam, the famous 16th-century traveler, mentioned that soup was the main dish of the Turks. Fish soups were featured at Ottoman dining tables particularly in the 18th century, taking their place on dinner menus in Istanbul owing to the abundance of flavor-enhancing ingredients. The scorpionfish, a tasty variety of the Istanbul seas available in all seasons, is suitable for soups due to its firm meat. It is featured as the main ingredient of our soups for this season.

Green Bean Soup

Bean is introduced from the American continent in the 19th century, however it’s Turkish name *“fasulye”* is derived from the Greek word *“phaselos”*. Previously, legumes such as broad beans and cowpeas, which existed in the Old World, were also generally referred to as *“fasulye”*. A pole bean variety widely cultivated in America from the 17th century was known as the *”Turkish bean”* indicates that the seeds of this variety likely originated from the Old World. A 1614 Italian source even refers to the borlotti bean as the *”Turkish bean”*. In the Ottoman Empire, beans were first mentioned in recipes such as *“fasulye mücveri”* (bean fritters) and Circassian salad (a bean salad with tarator sauce) in the 1844 culinary text Melceü’t Tabbahin. Inspired by this history, we created a unique dish by using this seasonal vegetable in a warm soup.

COLD

Imperial Salad of Garden Greens

Green salads, rooted in the rich history of Istanbul’s cuisine, were carefully prepared in Ottoman palace kitchens with fresh seasonal greens such as lettuce, arugula, spring onions, parsley, dill, and mint during times when tomatoes were not yet known. These salads, seasoned with garlic and onion, flavored with vinegar were gradually enriched with a mixture of olive oil and lemon. Staying true to the essence of traditional salads made in Ottoman palace kitchens, we have prepared this special salad for you by adding seasonal ingredients with a modern touch.

Trout

The Bosphorus, being a unique biological corridor, has always been rich in fish varieties. Despite this, trout was also one of the preferred fish caught in the streams around Istanbul and sold in Pera and Galata districts or given as gifts to the fishermen’s friends and family. Drawing inspiration from this, we have prepared this freshwater fish in a unique method and present it for your enjoyment.

Baby Artichoke with Olive Oil

An essential Mediterranean vegetable, the artichoke first appeared in the Ottoman palace kitchen records from 1471, where it was used for pickling.

It began to gain real importance in Istanbul's cuisine by the 17th century. Eremya Çelebi mentions that, in the early 1600s, Jewish residents of Ortaköy began cultivating a new variety of artichoke in their gardens. In the 18th century, provincial artichokes from Darıca were transported by sea, and local artichokes from Küçükçekmece in the Haslar district were widely available in Istanbul's markets. In Istanbul cuisine, artichokes were prepared in countless ways: stuffed with meat, stewed, fried, cooked in olive oil, and mixed into stews. We present this classic dish with our own special touch.

Tarama

Often referred to as *"poor man's caviar,"* tarama is an indispensable appetizer at Istanbul's rakı and celebration tables. This delicate spread is made from the carp or trout roe. The preparation of this dish requires considerable skill and patience. First the membrane on the roe has to be removed and then key to making a perfect tarama lies in carefully beating the fish roe with olive oil and lemon juice in the same direction until it thickens. When tarama reaches this stage, it is typically enjoyed with crispy toasted bread.

Cured Bonito

The best lakerda, one of the iconic specialties of the Bosphorus and Istanbul, is made from bonito caught in the north wind. Istanbulites enjoy it on its own or with other mezes at rakı tables. Traditionally served with red onion, lakerda was eaten by 'picking' it from a center plate with a fork, as the old saying goes. From a historical perspective, journalist Deniz Alphan notes that the word lakerda originates from Spanish, derived from *"la kerrida,"* meaning the desired one. After the late 1400's, lakerda was a staple at the tables of Jews who migrated from Spain to Ottoman lands. It was often prepared in Jewish households in Istanbul when bonito was abundant and was served as a traditional appetizer at family gatherings. Lakerda also held a special place in Istanbul's Rum community, frequently appearing on tables during festive celebrations 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.*

Bottarga (Abudaraho)

Passed down through generations, bottarga locally known as "abudaraho" is a lost delicacy of Istanbul cuisine. Abudaraho, is made from mature mullet fish during their spawning season. The roe is extracted with great skill and care without harming the fish, followed by a special processing method. The egg membrane is gently punctured using one's fingers, filling the pouch with its gel. It is then dried under the sun for a few days before being exposed to the wind for the following couple of days. Finally, it gets a warm wax coating and left to dry. Abudaraho had always been a staple in taverns and made its way to the feasts of Sultans in the Palace by the 19th century. Quality roe has flawless transparency without any visible black marks or veins when examined under light. When ready, the wax is peeled off, and the abudaraho is sliced thinly, seasoned with olive oil and lemon, and served on toasted bread.

Caviar Platter

Caviar is made with the roe of sturgeon and has been a staple delicacy in Istanbul cuisine since the Byzantines, especially for Lent of the Orthodox Christians, during which they would abstain from meat and meat products. Caviar was served with alcohol as a prized side dish in the Ottoman era during *"bade meclisi,"* namely dinner parties. Ottoman historian Mustafa Ali of Gallipoli, who lived in the 16th century, cites caviar and roe as the centerpiece meze of wine tables. Caviar and roe were delicacies kept in a special pantry with jams, cheese and pickles in the old Istanbul mansions and the palace.

The Caviar Inn across from the Stock Exchange in the Galata district was also known to sell caviar. Many of the shopkeepers would retrieve some caviar with a blunt-end spoon from a barrel, offered a sample to the customers, if the customers liked the taste and the quality of the caviar they would bargain for the price. The shopkeeper would then fill a white metal box with caviar and cover it with a vine leaf to keep the product fresh. Caviar was a standard item in restaurants of Istanbul run by white Russians fleeing from the Bolsheviks. It was served with blini and sour cream (smetana) and washed down with lemon vodka.

WARM

Talaş Börek
Talaş böreği is a type of börek made with a laminated dough technique, different from traditional böreks. The puff pastry technique, known as “yaprak hamuru” in Turkish cuisine, became widespread in Turkish cuisine in the 19th century due to Westernization influences. These types of böreks were named after Austria and were called ”Nemse” or ”Nemçe” böreği in the Ottoman Empire. The name talaş (sawdust) comes from the way the dough flakes off in layers when eating, resembling sawdust.

Vertika (Börek)
The first mention of vertika in written sources appears in Melceü’t Tabbahin, one of our earliest cookbooks, written by Mehmet Kamil in 1884. Vertika is described as a type of cookie, and its name is believed to come from a word used in the Balkans meaning ”vertical.” To prepare vertika, the dough is divided into pieces, and then a hole is made in the center by pressing with the thumb. After baking, the hole made on the vertika is filled with cheese, sauteed minced meat, or sour cherries. We’ve reimagined this classic Ottoman flavor that resembles a canapé, with our own unique twist for serve you.

Stuffed Vine Leaves
One of the typical features of dishes in Ottoman palace cuisine was the skillful combination of multiple food groups into a single dish by the palace cooks so as to prepare balanced and exceptionally delicious meals. Depending on the season, various delicious dolma dishes were made from fruits, vegetables and the leaves of fruit and nut trees. To prepare these special stuffed dishes, the palace kitchens employed chefs known as *“dolmacı,”* or *“dolma makers.”* Contrary to the distinction between stuffed dolma and wrapped dolma of Anatolian cuisine, all dishes in Istanbul cuisine made by stuffing fruits, vegetables and leaves are called dolma. Up until 19th century, dolma dishes were cooked only with water and clarified butter, served hot and contained minced lamb, rice, onion, various spices and parsley. However the increased use of olive oil after the 19th century paved the way for cold, vegetarian dolma dishes that were flavored with pine nuts, dried black currants, sugar and cinnamon. We followed the original recipe of the palace kitchens and filled the grape leaves for this dish.

Lamb Sweetbread
Although offal is often considered as the less valuable part of an animal, Istanbul has a cuisine that revives and celebrates it, unlike many European cuisines. As one of the favorite foods of the Central Asian Turks, offal also held a special place in the Ottoman palace kitchen. The most delicate and flavorful one being the sweetbreads. In Ottoman cuisine, sweetbreads, which are the thymus gland of the animal were sold in shops in the Sütlüce district, where slaughterhouses were located and grilled to perfection. Sweetbreads were typically consumed in the spring when the younger animals of large and small livestock were weaned. We steered away from the classic preparation and created a new flavor by sauteeing sweetbreads with the season’s root vegetables.

Lamb Kokoreç on the Bone

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 are marinated with salt, pepper, thyme, and onion juice are threaded on to a thick skewer, tightly wrapped with the intestines and tallow fat, and cooked over fire. Inspired by this traditional street flavor, kokoreç on bone is one of our most innovative dishes.

Grilled Calamari

As a cephalopod native to the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara, calamari holds a beloved place among the essential seafood dishes of traditional rakı tables. Because cooking calamari properly requires a certain skill, a meyhane (tavern) owner who could prepare it well was considered a true master. In addition to the meyhanes of Istanbul that served seafood, especially Orthodox households also featured a variety of fish, mussels, calamari, and cuttlefish—especially during fasting periods when they abstained from animal products. Inspired by the old Istanbul taverns, we've prepared calamari to perfection and present it with seasonal vegetables for your enjoyment.

PILAV

Pilav with Mussels

In addition to the fish taverns of Istanbul, mussel variations—such as mussels with rice, stuffed mussels, stewed mussels, and fried mussels with *"tarator"* sauce—were also staples of home cooking, ranking among the most beloved dishes and mezes. Among these, stuffed mussels (midye dolması) stood out as one of Istanbul's most iconic street foods. Mussels collected from the Bosphorus that were too small to be stuffed were set aside for *"salma"* (stewed mussels) and used in popular dishes like mussel pilaf or mussel stew.

Mussel pilaf, particularly favored by the Christian communities, was typically cooked with black pepper and cinnamon, left slightly moist, and eaten using mussel shells as spoons.

İstanbul Pilav

The technique for making pilaf entered the Seljuk and Ottoman culinary culture from medieval Arab-Persian cuisine. By the 15th century, pilaf had gained importance in the Ottoman palace kitchen and became a central dish at lavish banquets. Among the many different pilaf recipes developed in Istanbul's cuisine, the simplest, known as Istanbul pilaf, is best described by renowned writer Refik Halid Karay. He portrays it as a type of pilaf that is highly regarded and requires skill to make. It is prepared without any garnishes, using only water or broth. In the past, three key aspects were essential for true pilaf enthusiasts. First, the most esteemed pilaf was cooked with pure water and butter, with no other flavorings present besides the aroma of the rice and butter. Second, a layer of melted butter should remain at the bottom of the pot. Finally, the grains should be distinct and not stuck together. The rice pilaf should preferably puff out when stirred.

MAIN

Tas Kebap
Tas kebabı gets its name from the cooking technique. Diced lamb is mixed with various spices and placed in a pot. The pot is turned upside down and placed in a deep pan, where it is cooked without water. When the meat's juice seeps into the pot rice would be place and cooked with the meat juice to create a flavorful rice pilaf. In the 18th century, when tomatoes were not yet common, tas kebap was seasoned with spices like anise, cinnamon, cardamom, and black pepper. The rice that has also absorbed these flavors, deepens the flavor of the pilaf which is served alongside the lamb.

Veal Cutlet
In Ottoman culinary culture, meat was considered not only highly nutritious but also the most prestigious food. The renowned Turkish traveler Evliya Çelebi emphasized its importance by stating that *"meat is one of the foremost blessings, giving strength to the body when combined with bread."* In traditional Istanbul cuisine, meats were cooked using four main techniques: grilled over dry heat, slow cooked in broth as stews, fried, and külbastı, which holds a special place among these techniques. Thinly sliced meat is first seared quickly over a charcoal grill and then simmered in a lidded pan with broth, onions, and spices until tender. This method resulted in a soft, melt-in-the-mouth meat.

Lamb Shank
The meat dishes with fresh or dried fruits is a vestige of the Ottoman Era, that combines the sweetness of fruits with savory taste of meat dishes, where the flavor combination provides an exciting duo of opposing sensations. Mahmudiyye, a dish combining chicken, grapes, apricots and cinnamon; meat stuffed melon and apple, and lamb stew cooked with molasses and prunes are some of the most delicious examples of classic Ottoman cuisine.
Ottoman cuisine offers not only its own classic roster of foods but also reflects the first examples of fusion food, inspired and influenced by the cuisines of different cultures. One of these examples is *"patlıcan söğürme"* a dish made by roasting and mashing the eggplant, later on included the addition of bechamel sauce due to the French influence in late 19th century to create its successor *"patlıcan beğendi."* In this prize-winning dish, our chef has cooked the lamb shank with prunes over a low flame for hours, producing a duo of flavors, serving it with an *"patlıcan beğendi"* eggplant purée enriched with a few modernizing touches.

Chicken Masusa
While lamb and sheep were the most prominent in Ottoman cuisine, poultry such as chicken, hen, and turkey were also highly valued. In fact, chicken was considered even more precious than lamb and mutton and was a staple at affluent tables. In addition to chicken kebabs and chicken stews seen at palace feasts, dishes like chicken sautéed with onions and eggs or chicken pastries prepared with egg liaison were also common. One such dish was chicken masusa. The term masusa refers to dishes cooked with vinegar. This particular dish is a long-forgotten old Istanbul recipe seasoned with mastic, coriander and cinnamon among others, and cooked in saffron steeped in vinegar. It is considered akin to the chicken kalye with eggs, once enjoyed by Mehmed the Conqueror.

Grilled Sea Bass
In 10th-century Istanbul, fish merchants and fish sellers were named separately as fishmongers and fish sellers. Fish were classified as *"white-fleshed"* or *"ash-colored,"* and sales were made according to the rules set by the guilds to which the merchants belonged. The name levrek (sea bass) comes from Greek. Once considered one of the indispensable fish for feast tables due to its white, delicious flesh. When grilled the already delicious taste of sea bass is intensified with the addition of smoky flavor.

Steamed Red Sea Bream
Despite the abundance of fish in the Bosphorus, red sea bream is only caught in the open waters of the Marmara Sea. Its fishing season falls in April and May, and it was admired for its beautiful shape and color. In the past, wealthy residents of the Bosphorus mansions would travel specifically to the islands for red sea bream fishing, using rods and longlines. Though it was a form of recreation for them, the challenge of catching red sea bream made it the fish even more valuable.

Seabream
Karagöz fish have dark spots on their gill covers and tail, which resemble black eyes. These marks are likely the reason the fish is called *"Karagöz"* (meaning *"black eye"* in Turkish). Although many fish names used in Turkish originate from Greek, Karagöz is one of the few fish with a purely Turkish name, alongside fish like kalkan (turbot), kılıç (swordfish), and kırlangıç (swallowfish). Karagöz is a fast predatory fish found in Turkish waters year-round. It feeds on small fish, mussels, and shrimp, which makes its meat very delicious. We present this tasty fish, cooked with a special sauce, on our new menu.

SHARING

Salt Crusted Baked Sea Bass
The oldest written recipe for salt-baked fish is found in Archestratus' Life of Luxury, dating back to the 4th century BC. The recipe mentions that whole fish, such as sea bass or gilt-head bream, with white meat and round bodies, were cleaned and then completely covered with a mixture of water, egg whites, and salt before being baked. A similar method for baking fish on a tile is described in a 13th-century Muslim cookbook. In China, the same method was used for whole chickens during the Qing Dynasty, which lasted from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Some sources even suggest that the salt-baked chicken dish in the city of Hatay was inspired from China, but there is insufficient information to confirm this. Looking at historical records, the salt-baking method used for delicate products help preserve the product, trapping its moisture inside, cooking it evenly, and maximizing the flavor without drying it out.

Lobster & Shellfish Stew
During the Ottoman period, the drinking table was referred to as a *"bade meclisi."* The famous historian of the 16th century, Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, mentioned that a variety of seafood such as fish, crab, oysters, lobsters, prawns, and mussels should be served at this table. From the royal palace tables to taverns in Istanbul, there are various seafood prepared using different cooking methods. This dish was inspired from history and with few additional touches of BİZ Istanbul, it transformed into a magnificent feast, becoming part of shared meals.

Braised Lamb Rack
The ribcage part of the lamb, used in making cutlets, is called *"pirzola"* (chops) when cut with the bone. The term *"pirzola"* first appeared in 1844 in the culinary book Melceü't-Tabbahin, written by Mehmet Kâmil, where it was referred to as *"burjole."* Additionally, one of our significant culinary culture researchers, P. Mary Işın, noted that the name "burjole" originated from the Italian word *"bracinole."*
Bracinole is a term in Italian cuisine used to describe thin cutlets that are rolled and cooked. This term was likely adapted into Turkish over time and became known as *"pirzola."* Today, pirzola is particularly known as bone-in and thinly sliced lamb meat, typically cooked using the grilling method. Pirzola has both a deep-rooted historical background and has become an indispensable part of our culinary culture.

Beef Ribs
Until the late 19th century in the Ottoman era, beef was not used in cooking; nearly all meat dishes were prepared with lamb and, occasionally with chicken. With the wave of Westernization and the early years of the Republic Period, the ingredients of Istanbul's traditionally heavy dishes were lightened: tallow fat and clarified butter were replaced by olive oil, and lamb gave way to beef. Over time, nearly every dish that once used lamb began to be made with beef instead. While beef ribs are not traditionally part of Istanbul's cuisine, we've included them on our menu as a symbol of this culinary transformation.

DESSERT

Fresh Berry Tart
One of the reflections of French culture, which began to show its influence in Istanbul—especially in the Pera district—toward the late 1800s, was the opening of patisseries such as Markiz, Lebon, and Baylan, which sold French style desserts. These patisseries, which became popular meeting spots for young couples and frequented by writers and poets of the time, were integral to the city's social life. The non-Muslims living in Istanbul, as well as returning of Turks who had worked in Russia and Poland, contributed to the rise in the number of patisseries in the city. This period brought a European elegance and technical refinement to Istanbul's pastry scene, which has carried into today's bakeries. In tribute to that era, we offer a fresh berry tart that carries the flavors and memories of the past.

Kazandibi
The most unique dessert in the Istanbul cuisine is the *"tavukgöğsü kazandibi"*, which originated during the Arab-Persian period in the Middle Ages. Fresh ground chicken breast gives the custard its unique texture. The earliest mention of the recipe dates back to the 10th century as *"harissa."* It also appears in the Ottoman period as *"rice harissa"* or *"pistachio harissa,"* the latter of which more closely resembles the modern-day flavor. The 15th century cookbook of Şirvanî mentions *"memuniyye,"* the forerunner of tavukgöğsü kazandibi. Tavukgöğsü was not only present in the 19th-century Ottoman cookbooks, but also in the Ottoman and European style menus of the palace and feasts. This dessert was served during the French-style feast held in honor of Prince Napoléon-Jérome Bonaparte, hosted by Sultan Abdülaziz on July 1, 1868.

Beyoğlu Chocolate Maison
Chocolate was first introduced in the Ottoman Empire after the Industrial Revolution, when it was mass-produced by the British in 1842. Unlike in the West, chocolate consumption was very late in the Ottoman Empire. Starting from the mid-19th century, it began to spread, initially among the elite, especially at the palace, and later became popular among the public with the opening of modern cafes and patisseries in the westernized neighborhoods of the city. Foreign-origin chocolates, especially in Beyoğlu, were sold in a few large confectionery shops, one of which was Bon Marche, located across from the Haco Pulo Passage. The chocolate sold in Beyoğlu became associated with this neighborhood and started to be marketed as a product unique to Beyoğlu, thus giving rise to the name *"Beyoğlu Chocolate."*

Yoghurt Dessert
Although often confused with revani (semolina cake), yogurt dessert differs most noticeably in the very ingredient it's named after. The tanginess of yogurt enhances the flavor, adding subtle depth and complexity; its natural acidity helps tenderize the gluten in the flour, resulting in a softer texture. Drawing from one of the most traditional Turkish-Ottoman desserts, we've reinterpreted yogurt dessert for you, creating a trio featuring yogurt in its two most delightful forms in addition to the cake.

Warm Semolina Halva

Derived from the Arabic word *“hulviyat”,* which refers to sweets, helva is more than just a dessert. In Islamic societies, it symbolizes an act of goodwill. Sometimes it’s an offering made in fulfillment of a vow, other times it’s a dish for thanksgiving and celebration. It may also mark reconciliation or a peace agreement, shared around a table as a communal experience. As a sacred food that brings people together and symbolizes social solidarity, helva also graces our tables at BİZ.

Bread Kadayıf

Kadayıf is one of the oldest and most widely consumed desserts in Ottoman cuisine. While in the palace kitchen different kadayıf varieties are served, in old Istanbul homes, the flat kadayıf which resembles crumpets, was more commonly made. The name bread kadayıf was initially used as an alternative name for flat kadayıf. Later, in the 19th century, it started being used to refer to a type of bread-based dessert made from the crusts of special white bread prepared for the sultan in palace bakeries, known as *”saray etmeği”* (palace bread). As a modern twist, we present our bread kadayıf with an innovative flavor, served with a pudding made from seasonal fruit, the cherry.