HAS SALON STORIES

SOUP

Mullet Soup

Mullet, one of the most delicious fish in the Sea of Marmara, is known for being cunning and agile. It manages to escape from nets and fishing rods with its high speed and agility, earning it the reputation as one of the most cunning fish in evading capture. Chefs of old used to work with three types of mullet: grey mullet, thicklip grey mullet, and golden grey mullet. Grey mullet, which was considered the best one, was predominantly used to make pilaki. The Rum (Greek Orthodox community of Istanbul) used to cook mullet with mayonnaise on name days*. They would also use sawdust to make smoked mullet, which was an essential appetizer during Christmas and New Year.

An Ottoman cookbook dated 1764 mentions mullet soup and its wheat variety, showing just how essential this fish was to the palace kitchen.

*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.

Lamb Trotters Soup

Since the Ottoman palace cuisine had to strike the perfect balance between health and nutrition, people were encouraged to enjoy dishes such as lamb's head and trotters, especially during the winter.

Similar to tripe soup, lamb's trotters soup was the most popular soup in traditional soup restaurants. Lamb's trotters soup was also enjoyed as a cold cut with chickpeas and tandoor bread. Standing out as one of the special delicacies of the old Istanbul cuisine, the dish was made famous by a Rum soup maker named Eftim, and would soon come to be known as Beykoz lamb's trotters soup. In fact, whenever Sultan Abdulhamid II craved for lamb's trotters soup, it would be thinned out and occasionally served with yogurt sauce and topped with crushed red pepper. Lamb's trotters soup is enjoyed to this day for its health benefits and serves as a hangover cure after a night of drinking rakı.

COLD

Bottarga (Abudaraho)

Passed down over generations, bottarga is a lost delicacy in Istanbul cuisine. Abudaraho, also known as roe, was made from mature mullet fish during their spawning season, with great skill and care to extract the eggs without harming the fish, followed by a special processing method. The egg membrane was gently punctured using one's fingers, filling the pouch with 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 was soaked in warm wax and left to dry. Roe 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 bottarga is sliced thinly, seasoned with olive oil and lemon, and served on toasted bread.

Ottoman Palace Seasonal Salads

Before the introduction of tomatoes into Istanbul's cuisine, salads were prepared with romaine lettuce, cress, scallion, parsley, dill, mint, and other seasonal greens. Green salads were generally seasoned with garlic and onion. They were initially dressed with vinegar, and later with a mixture of olive oil and lemon. We have added small touches and seasonal pears to this salad, while staying true to the salads made in traditional Ottoman kitchens.

Caviar Plate

Caviar is made with the roe of greater sturgeon and has been a staple delicacy in Istanbul cuisine since the Byzantines during the Great 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 mezze 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, and customers would bargain for and purchase it if they liked the quality and taste of the sample. 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 in Istanbul run by white Russians fleeing from the Bolsheviks. It was served with blini and sour cream (smetana) and washed down with lemon vodka.

Prawn Cold Cuts

Evliya Çelebi lists prawn as a "haşerat-ı bahriyye," or "a sea insect." Prawns were first purchased for the kitchen of Mehmed the Conqueror (Mehmed II) in the month of Sha'ban, 1473. A popular Lent dish among the Christian communities in Istanbul, prawn or "teke," as it's called in Turkish, is included in cookbooks of the 19th century Istanbul cuisine as "teke salad." Our prawn salad is our interpretation of this teke salad.

Olive Oil Dishes from the Restaurant Counter

The emergence of olive oil as the cooking oil of choice came quite late for Istanbul cuisine in the Ottoman period, as butter, ghee and tail fat were more popular choices. Recipes for cold vegetable dishes cooked with olive oil were first included in cookbooks published at the end of the 19th century. Just like cooking dolma in olive oil, cooking vegetables in olive oil was a practice introduced by Christians living in Istanbul during Lent when they abstained from consuming animal products. Olive oil dishes are also common in Sephardic cuisine, which does not allow combining meat and milk. By the end of the 19th century, olive oil became widespread in Istanbul cuisine and a staple consumed by all communities. Turkish cuisine developed the absorption method technique, where vegetables were cooked slowly in extra virgin olive oil. This method reveals the true flavors of the vegetables and protects the nutrients in the vegetables.

HOT APPETIZERS

Stuffed Chard

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 dolma and wraps in Anatolian cuisine, all dishes in Istanbul cuisine made with stuffed fruits, vegetables and leaves are called dolma. 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. However, up until this period, dolma dishes were cooked only with water and ghee. They were served hot and contained minced lamb, rice, onion, various spices and parsley. When cooking with seasonal chard, we follow the traditional dolma recipe of the palace cuisine.

Deep-Fried Rolls with Brains

The brain has a special place in Turkish Sephardic cuisine, and it was an indispensable component of traditional Friday dinners. Brain was also a popular choice in Istanbul cuisine, as it was often enjoyed with rakı in taverns. Another appetizer that serves as a faithful companion to rakı is the deep-fried phyllo rolls stuffed with white cheese and parsley. In an article he wrote for Tan Newspaper in 1944, renowned writer Halid Refik Karay mentions his love for deep-fried rolls with brains and gruyere, a combination of two Istanbulite flavors. Inspired by Karay's favorite börek, we have crafted our own version of deep-fried rolls with brains.

Talas Borek

Unlike the traditional borek, talas borek is made with the folding method. Mille-feuille became widespread in Turkish cuisine beginning with the commencement of westernization in the 19th century. These pastries were also called Nemse or Nemçe after the Ottoman exonym for Austria. Talas, or "talaş," on the other hand, means "shavings" and refers to the dough flaking when eaten.

Oyster Külbastı

According to the accounting records in the Topkapı Palace, oysters were first purchased for the palace kitchen during the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror. While not quite widespread, they are still present in the Istanbul cuisine. One of the oldest written recipes of oysters is known to be in the 1844 cookbook Melceü't-Tabbahin. The Oyster Külbastı recipe describes how to separate the oyster from its shell, drizzle olive oil over it and sprinkle it with salt and black pepper, then proceed to grill and serve. The recipe also advises squeezing lemon on the cooked oysters and using a fork to eat.

Stuffed Squash

Every November, we start seeing squashes lined up in Istanbul restaurants. Despite being a vegetable of North American origin, squash was known as cucurbita maxima in Latin, and as buttercup squash, Hubbard squash and winter squash during the Ottoman period. Sources claim that squash was made into soup, meat-dolma, compote, dessert, and jam in the palace kitchen. Known as corn squash in Istanbul in the lóth century, the vegetable was called Turk's turban in Italy during the same period. Bartolomeo Scappi, one of the most famous chefs of the Italian Renaissance, shared recipes of soups and stuffings made with this squash. For stuffings in particular, he suggested using a zucchini large enough to fit several roosters into it. Inspired by these recipes, we have prepared a stuffed squash variety with an unmatched presentation. Enjoy.

Stuffed Squid

In addition to taverns serving seafood, Rum households in Istanbul abounded with seafood including fish, mussels, squid, and cuttlefish, particularly during Lent when they were not allowed to consume meat. Stuffed squid, one of the best-known squid dishes, is traditionally made with pine nuts, dried black currants, cinnamon, allspice and black pepper; but, the most noteworthy thing about this dish is that it contains plenty of onions.

Stuffed Caul Fat

Rice was a staple of the rich Ottoman cuisine. Since it was both hard to obtain and expensive, rice pilaf could only be consumed by the elite until the end of the 17th century. Valued almost as much as meat dishes, rice pilaf has been enriched with various ingredients and other varieties. Back in the 15th century, rice pilaf was complemented with various spices, currants, pine nuts, and lamb liver to serve as stuffing for caul fat in the Ottoman palace kitchens. Originally used by the Rum to make stuffed turkey for New Year's celebrations, rice pilaf soon made its way to all segments of society, and became a traditional New Year's dish for Istanbulites.

Caul fat kebab was mentioned for the first time in an Ottoman cookbook dated 1764. Made using lamb flavored with spices and onions, this dish is cooked in the oven, which is why it is occasionally referred to as an "oven kebab." We combine these two old Ottoman flavors with an innovative perspective to offer you caul fat stuffed with rice pilaf.

RICE PILAF

Rice Pilaf with Mussels

Stuffed mussels are a staple in Istanbul's street food. Mussels collected in the Bosphorus that were too small to be stuffed were separated and used in the popular rice pilaf or "salma" dish. Often preferred by the Christian community, rice pilaf with mussels was seasoned with black pepper and cinnamon and cooked to retain moisture. The mussel shells were used as spoons.

Istanbul Rice Pilaf

One of the most beautiful descriptions of Istanbul rice pilaf comes from the renowned author Refik Halit Karay. Karay described Istanbul rice pilaf as a most welcome and delicate dish that requires skills to prepare. It is cooked with plain water or broth without any other ingredients. In the old days, true rice pilaf enthusiasts had three main criteria. One: good rice pilaf is cooked with water and proper butter. The only flavors it should contain are rice and butter. Two: the bottom of the rice pilaf pot should be buttered. Three: grains should be distinct and not stuck together. The rice pilaf should preferably puff out when stirred.

Sea Bass Pilaf

Rice, a product that was both hard to obtain and expensive, was initially introduced from China through the Mongol invasions of the Far East during the 13th to 15th centuries. It first became popular in the palace and among the aristocrats of the Safavids in Iran. Starting in the 15th century, the consumption and social reputation of rice in the Ottoman palace cuisine gradually increased, and pilaf became the signature dish of rich and luxurious Ottoman tables. Moreover, rice pilaf was valued almost as much as meat dishes at the grand feasts hosted by the Sultan or the Ottoman elite. Brimming with unique ingredients and high creativity, the palace kitchens turned this valued dish into a variety of delicious pilafs. Fish pilaf was among these. The first fish pilaf recipe is mentioned in Melceü't-Tabbâhîn (Refuge of Cooks), written by Mehmet Kâmil in 1844. This pilaf is cooked in olive oil and served with cinnamon sprinkled on top. Inspired by this recipe, we have created our own fish pilaf.

Rice Pilaf with Chestnuts and Quail

For centuries, quails have thrived in the expansive wheat fields of the northern Black Sea region, embarking on their annual migration southward in flocks beginning in mid-August, seeking milder climates. At the beginning of September, quails become plump and tired, after which they are hunted by the hunters in Turkey's Eastern Thrace and served on the tables of the people of Istanbul. The quail season held a special significance for the people of old Istanbul. Especially,

the restaurants around Galata and Tünel would offer rotisserie quail, enticing Istanbulites to dine there and savor this delectable game. As one of the fatty game birds of the autumn months, quail stands out as one of the most delicious dishes of Istanbul cuisine. We have adorned this delicious bird with chestnuts, another specialty of the season, to create a wonderful rice pilaf recipe. Enjoy...

MAIN COURSE

Scorpionfish Pilaki

The word pilaki is derived from the Ancient Greek word plakíon, a flat, flame-resistant stone cooking vessel. Over time, any food cooked in this particular container came to be known as plak or pilaki. While the main ingredient of pilaki may vary, pilaki dishes all share the commonality of being cooked with little water on low heat. This ensures the ultimate flavor is drawn from few ingredients. Pilaki can be cooked with seafood including fish, mussels and lobsters as well as with pulses. The staple ingredients of pilaki are onion, garlic, a topping of parsley and a drizzling of olive oil. These can be complemented with vegetables such as potatoes, carrots or celery, and the flavor can be enhanced with vinegar or lemon juice. In the traditional culinary culture of Istanbul, pilakis are made with a single main ingredient. However, we have innovatively brought together two basic products, fish and beans, to create a perfect blend of flavor.

Chicken Masusa

While lamb and sheep were the most prominent in Ottoman cuisine, poultry including chicken, pullet and turkey were also prized. In fact, chicken was more exquisite than sheep and lamb and was a must-have in wealthy households. The term masusa refers to food cooked in vinegar. This particular dish is a long-forgotten old Istanbul recipe seasoned with mastic, coriander and cinnamon among others, and cooked in saffron marinated in vinegar. It is considered akin to the chicken kalye with eggs, once enjoyed by Mehmed the Conqueror.

Tas Kebab

Tas kebab is so-named because of the method in which it is cooked. First, chopped lamb is mixed with various spices in a bowl. The bowl is then turned over and placed at the bottom of a pot to be cooked without water. The broth will eventually leak into the pot. Rice pilaf is then added to cook and marinate in this broth. In the 18th century, before tomatoes were introduced in the region, tas kebab would be spiced with aniseed, cinnamon, cardamom, and black pepper. Rice pilaf would be marinated in these flavors, producing the most delicious pilaf, which was then served as a side with kebab.

Lamb Külbastı

Külbastı is a very special cooking method used for boneless lamb meat that is pounded to become very thin. First, the lamb is cooked over embers, then rubbed with salt, black pepper and onion juice, and placed in a covered pan. The pan is placed on the fire, and the meat is marinated until it becomes very soft. In this way, you will achieve the perfect tenderness for lamb külbastı.

Veal Külbastı and Root Vegetables

Külbastı is a cooking method where thin layers of meat are cooked over embers. Thin-sliced meat is briefly grilled, then marinated in a pot in broth, onion and spices. The outcome is delightful, tender meat. We serve thin cuts of beef prepared using the külbastı method with seasonal root vegetables.

Grilled Seabass

Since the Bosphorus Strait is a unique biological corridor, its fish have always been abundant and diverse. Istanbul was once home to the world's largest and most pristine fisheries: the beauty, diversity, freshness, and deliciousness of its fish were unmatched. In the 10th century, the tradesmen involved in fish sales in Istanbul were called fishermen and fishmongers. Fish were divided into "white" and "grey" fish, and sales were made according to the rules determined by the guilds with which the tradesmen were affiliated. Sea bass is one of the most prominent white fish. It is called "levrek" in Turkish, a name derived from the Greek word "lavraki." Greeks frequently served bass with mayonnaise for special guests on birthdays, anniversaries, and religious feasts. Grilling the delicate sea bass contributes a certain smokiness to it, which doubles the flavor of the fish.

Grilled Picarel

Derived from the Greek words smarida or smaragdinos, i.e. spicara smaris, picarel was one of the first fish caught by amateur fishermen shortly after they first began fishing in Istanbul. This delicious white fish is perfect for the winter. It is claimed that picarels were found in Lake Terkos, which was originally a lagoon. Fried in olive oil and consumed daily by middle- and low-income Rum, picarel is among the fish highly praised by famous traveler Evliya Çelebi.

Turkish Dumplings

The Turkish manti can be traced to Central Asia and the Caucasus. The origin of the word "manti" is likely the Chinese word "mantou," which means "stuffed heads" or "barbarian heads." The predecessor of manti, a piece of cultural heritage shared with other societies in the surrounding region, is cited in the Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* compiled in 1072–1074 as tutmaç, which refers to pieces of unfilled dough. The first records of manti in the Ottoman period date back to the rule of Mehmed the Conqueror. A favorite dish of Mehmed the Conqueror, manti is filled with minced meat and served with yogurt to this day. The oldest known recipe for manti was published in a book by Muhammed bin Mahmud Şirvani from the first half of the 15th century. This recipe requires the addition of crushed chickpeas, cinnamon, and vinegar to minced meat, and that the manti be served with garlic yogurt and sumac.

*First printed Turkish-Arabic dictionary

MAIN COURSE FOR SHARING

Salt-Baked Sea Bass

The oldest written recipe for salt-baked fish is found in the book "Life of Luxury" written by Archestratus in the 4th century BC. According to the recipe, a white and round fish, such as sea bass or sea bream, is cleaned, completely covered with a mixture of water, egg whites and salt, and baked. Similarly, a Muslim cookbook from the 13th century mentions fish baked on tiles. In China, during the Qing Dynasty's reign from the 17th to the 19th centuries, this same culinary technique was applied to whole chickens. While some sources state that the salt-baked chicken made in Hatay was inspired by China, there is not enough data to verify this claim.

Historical data shows that the salt-baking method is used for delicate dishes, protecting the ingredients, trapping moisture, preventing the dish from drying out, and maximizing flavor with even heat.

Tandoori Lamb Shoulder

In addition to being nutrient-dense, meat was considered the most prestigious food item in Ottoman food culture, as in many other cultures. Tandoor, one of the oldest cooking methods,

originated from the Central Asian Turks, and it was generally used to cook entire animals. To build an oven, a deep well would be dug in the ground and a fire would be lit at the bottom of the well. The meat was then slowly cooked in this oven until it was completely separated from the bones. This slow-cooking method is also mentioned in the records of Istanbul from 1502. We have adapted this traditional method using modern techniques to prepare a lamb shoulder tandoori for you, cooked to perfection, where the meat falls off the bone.

Whole Roasted Goose

The arrival of February in Istanbul signals the beginning of the goose and duck season. Since it snowed in winter, geese and ducks roamed in a naturally cleaner environment, and would not be slaughtered before they ate snow. Eating snow would make their meat firmer and more delicious. Moreover, consuming these fatty animals in winter was much healthier for the stomach. During the Ottoman period, goose meat was consumed mostly in high-income households and at the palace, and was even served at circumcision feasts. While it can also be made into rotisserie, stew and stuffing, our preference is to roast the goose.

Whole Turbot Tandoori

The Turkish names for fish in Istanbul mostly stem from Greek or Italian origins, with only two exceptions: swordfish (kılıç balığı) and turbot (kalkan). Turbot, abundant in the Black Sea, was once plentifully caught along the Black Sea stretch of the Bosphorus by fishermen from Beykoz, who then transported their haul to local fisheries for sale. This is why it was previously known as Beykoz turbot. It is most delicious in February and March. Male turbots yield more meat, while female turbots are more delicious. Back in the old days of Istanbul, turbot was served at the winter parties held in the waterside mansions of Istanbul's polite society. Turbot was also enjoyed by the Rum during religious holidays, and by Armenians between Christmas and Easter.

DESSERT

Burned Milk-Chicken Breast Pudding

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 menus of the palace and feasts. The recipe also comes up in the list of alla Turca and alla Franca dishes and desserts served during the French-style feast in honor of Prince Napoléon-Jérome Bonaparte, hosted by Sultan Abdülaziz on July 1, 1868.

Baklava by Güllüoğlu

Baklava has been a celebration food for all social classes from the palace to rural areas since the Ottoman times. While baklava was cooked all over the old Ottoman lands, and even beyond the borders, the recipe was well refined in the Topkapı Palace. The parade of baklava from the palace to the Janissary headquarters would be a once-a-year celebration for the people of Istanbul. While pistachio may be the preferred ingredient nowadays, old Istanbul communities and palace kitchens would cook baklava with walnuts, and occasionally with fruits. We wanted to offer a distinctive twist on this traditional dessert, so we have specially crafted our baklava with chestnuts, the most special nuts of the season.

Pumpkin Pudding

For the Ottomans, "milk pudding" referred to desserts that contained rice flour, milk, and sugar. The research conducted by Priscilla Mary Işın, one of the most prominent food researchers of the Ottoman period, traces the origins of milk pudding back to the Sasanians, who once inhabited Iran. She claims that this dessert was made for Al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra, an Arab general in the late 7th century. It's believed he was so fond of the dessert that he named it after himself: Al-Muhallabiye. Evliya Çelebi mentions Istanbul's esnaf-ı muhallabiciyan (milk pudding sellers), who traditionally served their delicacies on foot. With the opening of milk pudding shops on the streets of Istanbul after the 1950s, the selection of desserts was expanded, and milk pudding transitioned to being served in seated establishments.

Pumpkin, one of the highest-regarded flavors of the season, is the only vegetable that is used to make dessert in Istanbul cuisine. Refik Halid Karay sings the praises of milk pudding with pumpkin in his book "Üç Nesil Üç Hayat (Three Generations, Three Lives)," saying that "with a warm color, boiled brown sugar and plenty of walnuts, pumpkin is most certainly a winter dessert." Inspired by these words, we have created a milk pudding variety with pumpkin, and tripled the flavor with candies and ice cream.

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.

Portakallı Ekmek Kadayıfı / Ekmek Kadayıf with Oranges

Kadayıf boasts the unique honor of being not only the oldest but also the most cherished dessert in Ottoman cuisine. While the palace kitchen often served tel (shredded) kadayıf or ekmek (bread) kadayıf, old Istanbul households would often bake yassı kadayıf, now a long-forgotten version. The term "ekmek kadayıf" was first used interchangeably with yassı kadayıf. Then, in the 19th century, it began to refer to a dessert made for the sultan in the palace

patisserie with bread crust, later known as the "palace bread." We hope you enjoy our innovative take on ekmek kadayıf, which we serve with the milk pudding we make from seasonal oranges.

Sorbet

Fruit sherbet and sorbet made with crushed or shaved ice or snow were popular in the Ottoman period. Spreading to the Western world from Italy, the dessert came to be known as sorbetto in Italy and sorbet in France, inspired by sherbet. We have prepared our sorbets from seasonal fruits, and offer unique flavors to sweeten your palate and refresh your senses after your meal.