

BAR STORIES

KNIFE-CUT

Cured Bonito

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.

Shrimp Tarator

Tarator is a yogurt-like sauce originally made by coarsely crushing walnuts, hazelnuts, or almonds and mixing them with stale breadcrumbs, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, or lemon juice. During the Ottoman period, tarator was poured over fresh or boiled vegetables and also consumed with seafood. Designed as a fusion of the lobster tarator and teke (prawn) salad found in Ottoman cuisine, this canapé has been reinterpreted with the BiZ Istanbul touch and finds its place on our menu as a single-bite bar snack served on bread.

Russian Salad with Salmon

This salad was first created in the 1860s at the Hermitage Restaurant in Moscow by the Belgian-Russian chef Lucien Olivier. It quickly became the establishment's most beloved dish and came to be known by its original name, Salad Olivier. Chef Olivier kept his recipe a strict secret until his death. The White Russians, fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, brought this delicacy with them to Istanbul. Today, countless versions of this classic exist. We have interpreted it in its simplest and most essential form: carrots, potatoes, peas, gherkin pickles, and mayonnaise... but this time served as a canapé accompanied by cured salmon on our bar menu.



PAN-FRIED

Fried Mussel Sandwich

In the old days, mussels were mostly consumed by Istanbul's Christian citizens, especially as a meze in taverns (meyhane). Only those who purchased special harvesting rights could collect mussels from the Bosphorus' mussel beds. Ottoman cookbooks contain various recipes made with mussels, including stuffed mussels, fried mussels, mussel salma, and mussel pilaki. Fried mussels, which is a prominent street food and meyhane mezes, most often enjoyed with a cold beer. Our mussels are served as a sandwich with our specially prepared walnut and garlic tarator sauce.

Puff Börek

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

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 *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 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.

Fried Calamari

Calamari, one of the most frequently consumed seafood items in Istanbul, is known as the most delicious variety of cuttlefish. In old Istanbul, calamari was consumed as a meyhane meze, and its most important companion was a classic tarator sauce made with walnuts.

Horse Mackerel Pan

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.

Zucchini Fritters (Mücver)

Mücver is a dish made by preparing a mixture of vegetables, minced meat, flour, and beaten eggs, then frying it in the form of patties. In the past, mücver was cooked in special pans with round, honeycomb-like indentations. The original name of this dish was *mücmer*, which evolved over time into *mücver*, and it is now most often made with zucchini. The primary reason for this is that the inner parts of zucchinis (removed when making stuffed zucchini) were used to avoid waste. During the Ottoman period, the most common varieties were roasted eggplant mücver and fresh bean mücver. It is also known that versions with minced meat or liver existed, and even the famous dish *kadınbudu köfte* (lady’s thigh meatballs) is a type of mücver.



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

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

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.

Beef Liver

The Turkish word sakatat (offal) comes from the Arabic word saqaṭāt, derived from the root “s-q-ṭ”, meaning “things that fall” or “discarded items.” Istanbul’s cuisine places great value on all kinds of offal. Offal, one of the favorite foods of the Central Asian Turks, also held a special place in the Ottoman palace kitchen. Dishes such as tripe soup (işkembe çorbası), liver kebab, and trotter stew (paça yahnisi) were consumed in the palace kitchens and have survived to the present day, retaining their importance and diversifying over time. Veal liver, still an important offal in Istanbul’s cuisine, is grilled and served as a sandwich with its classic accompaniment: sumac-seasoned onions with parsley.

