

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 its firm meat. It is featured as the main ingredient of our soups for this season.

Green Bean Soup

The first trace of the artichoke in Ottoman imperial cuisine dates back to 1471. Records from that period show that the artichoke was used as to pickle. However, it was not until the 17th century that the artichoke truly gained importance in Istanbul’s culinary tradition. For centuries, artichokes have been prepared in countless ways on Istanbul tables: stuffed with meat, braised, pan-fried, cooked with olive oil, and stewed. Now, we have added a new creation to this deep-rooted heritage: we have transformed the artichoke into a velvet-smooth soup.



COLD

Purslane Salad

Consumed in Central Asia and the Near East since ancient times, purslane – particularly when cooked with yogurt and butter – was recommended by medical scholars to be eaten before setting out on a journey. It is known that during the Ottoman period, around 1425, purslane soup was commonly made. Sources also show that purslane was prepared with egg-lemon sauce, with eggs, and as a tarator salad with cucumbers and hazelnuts. Inspired by this knowledge, we have prepared a purslane salad with yogurt and adorned it with seasonal fruits.

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.

Baby Artichoke with Olive Oil

The artichoke’s rise to prominence in Istanbul cuisine began in the 17th century. In the early 1600s, historian Eremya Çelebiyan mentions that the Jews of Ortaköy started cultivating a new variety of artichoke in their vegetable gardens.

By the 18th century, provincial artichokes arriving by sea from Darıca, alongside local artichokes grown in Küçük Çekmece in the Haslar district, were abundantly available in Istanbul's markets. One of the most important dishes made with artichokes in Istanbul cuisine is artichoke cooked with olive oil, presented here with the BiZ Istanbul 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 defining characteristics of the dishes created in Ottoman imperial cuisine – and which continue to define Istanbul’s culinary tradition – was the palace cooks’ mastery in skillfully combining multiple food groups in a single dish, achieving both balance and extraordinary flavour. Stuffed vegetables and fruits (dolma) were prepared according to the season, using everything from produce that could be hollowed out to leaves of fruit and nut trees, resulting in a great variety of delicious and inventive stuffed dishes. To prepare these special dolma, the palace kitchen even employed cooks known as dolmaci.

During the Ottoman period, dolma were predominantly cooked only with water and clarified butter, served hot, and filled with minced lamb, rice, onion, various spices, and parsley.

We have adapted this traditional palace kitchen recipe for the fresh vine leaves that begin to appear in the spring and present it for your enjoyment.

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 dish.

Grilled Calamari Skewer

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.

Grilled Shrimp

Prawns, which Evliya Çelebi referred to as "sea insects," first appeared in records in the year 1473 (Şaban 877 AH) among the supplies procured for the palace kitchen of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. Prawns – or teke – consumed particularly by Istanbul's Christian community during fasting periods, took their place in 19th-century Istanbul cookbooks as "teke salad." To further highlight the flavor of the prawns, we have reinterpreted this dish by grilling them and then adding the dressing from teke salad.



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.

Istanbul 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 COURSES

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 placed and cooked with the meat juice to create a flavorful rice pilaf. In the 18th century, when tomatoes were not yet common, tas kebab 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 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.

Mahmudiyye with Honey

Mahmudiyye, a chicken dish from the classical period (15th–16th centuries) of Ottoman cuisine with dried fruits and noodles, was one of the most beloved and frequently prepared dishes of its time. The survival of the Mahmudiyye recipe to the present day is thanks to Muhammed bin Mahmud Şirvani, a physician from the reign of Murad II, and his 15th-century work on Ottoman cuisine. According to the recipe in that book, the dish was made with a type of noodle called "pilav eriştəsi" (rice pilaf noodles), however we opted to serve it with classic hand-cut noodles.

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 seabass is intensified with the addition of smoky flavor.

Sour Fish Stew

This dish is one of the most delicious examples of how different cultures of Istanbul come together at the same table. It draws its inspiration from the sour fish stew, a cornerstone of Istanbul's Sephardic cuisine for centuries. This tradition is further interpreted with sumac water, which was frequently used in Ottoman palace cuisine to add a refreshing sourness to dishes. The fish used is a true Istanbul fish: the scorpionfish, that is available in every season. This flavorful dish represents both the past and the very essence of Istanbul.

Beef Stroganoff

This dish takes its name from the Stroganov family, one of Russia's leading aristocratic dynasties. The first known written recipe appears in the 1871 edition of Elena Molokhovets' famous Russian cookbook, *A Gift to Young Housewives*. In this early recipe, beef is cut into cubes and cooked in a sauce containing mustard. By the early 20th century, onions, mushrooms, and tomato sauce were added, and the dish came to be served with matchstick fries. Although the French chef Charles Brière contributed to its worldwide spread, Beef Stroganoff became a part of Istanbul's culinary culture thanks to the White Russians who fled the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Settling largely in the Beyoğlu and Galata districts, the White Russians served Russian flavors in the dining and entertainment venues they opened there, leaving a lasting mark on Istanbul's cuisine.

Lamb Chops

The word *pirzola* (lamb chop) first appears in 1844 in a cookbook titled *Melceü't-Tabbahin* (The Cooks' Refuge) by Mehmet Kâmil, spelled as *burjole*. Prominent culinary culture researcher P. Mary Işın has written that the name *burjole* is derived from the Italian word *bracinole*. In Italian cuisine, *bracinole* refers to thin slices of beef (similar to cutlets) rolled up and cooked. It is thought that this term was adapted into Turkish over time and became established as *pirzola*. Today, *pirzola* is known especially as thin, bone-in slices of lamb, typically cooked by grilling. Lamb chops thus have both a deep historical background and remain an indispensable part of our culinary culture.



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.

Seafood Dane-i Rişte

Dane, which means "grain" in Persian, is the common name for all dishes made with grain-based ingredients (such as rice, bulgur, semolina, or noodles) that remain separate and grainy after cooking. Erişte (noodle), in turn, comes from the Persian word *rişte*, meaning "thread." In the 1500s, the original recipe for this dish in the Topkapı Palace used chicken and minced lamb.

Furthermore, it was a common practice to add color to pilaf dishes (dane) using various ingredients. We have reinterpreted this deep-rooted tradition with the BİZ Istanbul touch. Instead of the meats used in the classical recipe, we have combined it with fresh seafood from the Bosphorus. By bringing together a naturally colored pilaf (where tomato gives its color to orzo) with seafood from the Bosphorus, we have created a colorful, flavorful, and unforgettable sharing platter.

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-Jérôme 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 Hacı Pasa 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."

Pavlova

This meringue-based dessert takes its name from the Russian ballerina Anna Matveyevna Pavlova (1881–1931). Its place of origin is the continent of Australia, though whether the true inventor was Australian or New Zealander is still a matter of debate. Its connection to Istanbul is that, it is known as one of the dishes introduced to Istanbul's culinary culture by the "White Russians" – aristocrats, intellectuals, and soldiers who fled the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and once influenced Istanbul's entertainment and social life. As delicate and graceful as a ballerina, this dessert is presented to you with the BİZ Istanbul touch.

Keşkül

In Persian, keşkül is a large bowl or begging bowl that dervishes carried on their shoulders, typically made from a coconut shell or ebony. Fukara means "the poor." Hence, Keşkül-ü Fukara means "the poor man's bowl" or "beggar's bowl." These bowls, in which dervishes collected various foods, gave their name to the dessert keşkül-i fukara. In contrast to its name, this dessert – with its rich content of nuts – was a sweet that could be afforded by relatively wealthy people. The first written recipe for this dessert is known to date from 1882, and it specifies that it contained pine nuts, pistachios, and almonds. Over time, the dessert became simpler, evolving into a bademli muhallebi (almond pudding) and became known simply as keşkül. The classic keşkül has been reinterpreted with the BİZ Istanbul touch.

Bread Kadayif

Kadayif is one of the oldest and most widely consumed desserts in Ottoman cuisine. While in the palace kitchen different kadayif varieties are served, in old Istanbul homes, the flat kadayif which resembles crumpets, was more commonly made. The name bread kadayif was initially used as an alternative name for flat kadayif. 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 kadayif with an innovative flavor, served with a custard made from sour cherries.

Baklava

Baklava has been the dessert for special occasions for all segments of society, from the palace to the countryside, from the Ottoman period to the present day. Although types of baklava are found throughout the former Ottoman geography and beyond, it reached its most refined form in the Topkapı Palace. The Baklava Procession, which left the palace and headed to the Janissary barracks – a veritable spectacle for the people of Istanbul – was eagerly awaited every year. Although today baklava is best known with pistachios, in Istanbul and in the palace kitchens it was made with walnuts. We have produced this traditional dessert specially for you.

Two Shores Sorbet

During the Ottoman period, fruit syrups and sherbets served chilled with crushed or shaved ice or snow were extremely popular. This custom spread to the Western world starting from Italy, where it took the name sorbetto (inspired by sherbet) and then sorbet in France. We have prepared a variety of sorbets to serve as a refreshing dessert on hot days.

