

Traditional Anatolian Ceremonial Dishes

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Abstract

Turkish Cuisine has developed by its environment and combined with the characteristics of different cultures to form the rich food culture of today. On the other hand, traditions, religious beliefs and lifestyle with a structure that enriches the culinary culture of Turkey. Birth, marriage, death and other special days related to these events have very important place in the traditions of Turks and these days have influenced the culinary culture. They carry out many social functions such as bringing people together, strengthening social ties, reinforcing common values, keeping traditions alive and transferring them to future generations. The meals served during realization of these activities constitute the basis for culinary cultures which are among the important cultural elements. In this research, the traditions carried from past to present, the customs applied in the ceremonies such as birth, wedding and death and the food culture specific to these days in Anatolia were compiled.

Keywords: *Anatolian dishes, birth ceremonies, death ceremonies, wedding ceremonies*

Geleneksel Anadolu Tören Yemekleri

Öz

Türk Mutfağı, çevresel etkilere bağlı olarak gelişmeye devam etmekte ve farklı kültürlerin özellikleriyle birleşerek günümüzün zengin yemek kültürünü oluşturmaktadır. Öte yandan gelenekler, dini inançlar ve yaşam tarzı Türkiye'nin mutfak kültürünü zenginleştiren etkenlerdendir. Doğum, evlilik, ölüm ve diğer özel günler Türklerin geleneklerinde çok önemli bir yere sahiptir ve Türk mutfak kültürünü etkilemiştir. Bu özel günler insanları bir araya getirmek, sosyal bağları güçlendirmek, ortak değerleri pekiştirmek, gelenekleri yaşatmak ve gelecek nesillere aktarmak gibi pek çok sosyal işlevi yerine getirmektedir. Bu faaliyetlerin gerçekleştirilmesi sırasında sunulan yemekler, önemli kültürel öğeler arasında yer alan mutfak kültürlerinin temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bu araştırmada geçmişten günümüze taşınan gelenekler, doğum, düğün, ölüm gibi törenlerde uygulanan örf ve adetler ve Anadolu'da bu günlere özgü yemek kültürü derlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadolu yemekleri, doğum törenleri, cenaze törenleri, düğün törenleri

Introduction

Turkish cuisine which is an important element of Turkish cultural life; it is also one of the few most famous cuisines in the world (Sürücüoğlu and Özçelik, 2008). Turkish cuisine has been developed with the influence of various cultures established in Central Asia and Anatolia for centuries and today it has taken its place among the most famous cuisines of the world with its rich food variety, food preparation, storage and cooking methods and service manner (Büyüktuncer and Yücecan, 2009). In general, Turkish cuisine consisting of cereals, meat, meals prepared with some meat and various types of vegetables, soups, dishes with olive oil, pastries, drinks, desserts and herbs; it has revealed its own healthy food types such as molasses, yogurt, tarhana and bulgur (Sürücüoğlu and Özçelik, 2008).

As a historical part of societies, the phenomenon of food, which carries the accumulation and diversity of centuries, appears as a part of cultural patterns rather than just an act of saturating the abdomen. In this context, food is one of the basic facts of ceremonies such as religious ceremonies, weddings, entertainments, funerals, festivals and many social behaviors (Sağır, 2012). Foods are offered for many different purposes in communities such as banquets and festivals as a means of entertainment, ceremonies and gifts (Çapar and Yenipınar, 2016). Turkish food has changed according to special days and ceremonies since history (Solmaz and Dülger Altınır, 2018).

The tradition of eating together is quite common among Turks. Collectively with ceremonies, feasts, eating is a common tradition in the history of the Turks (Birer, 1990). Special day meals are the meals that

the Turks have been eating since the days before the adoption of Islam, which they have continued in the traditional way (Yalçın Çelik, 2010). The ceremonies of Turks can be gathered under religious, social and personal titles. In these ceremonies, eating and feasting are intertwined. With these ceremonies, a special culinary culture emerged. There are three major transitional periods of human life. These are birth, marriage and death (Artun, 2001). Yusuf Has Hacib specified in *Kutadgu Bilig* there are some of the feasts as a kind of banquet of XI. century. Some of these dishes are known as *küdenke aş* (wedding meal), *togum meal* (birth meal) and *yoga meal* (funeral meal) (Sandıkçioğlu et al., 2019). During the time from birth to death, food and beverages served in ceremonies, religious or social festivals related to people's special days are applied as if they were subject to a rule in Anatolia (Güler, 2010). For example, it is stated that *Keşkek* is one of the most important meal types which is consumed in all transition period ceremonies (Çekiç, 2015). It is written that *pilafs*, *Boranis*, *stew*, *kebabs*, *Helise*, as well as *sherbet*s, *soups*, *Tutmaç*, *Tirit*, *slurry*, *bread* and *vegetable dishes*, *halva* and *Kadayif* desserts were given in the ceremonies held during the Seljuk and Anatolian Principalities (Akın, Gültekin and Özkoçak, 2015). In this study, foods prepared at birth, wedding and funeral ceremonies and food culture in Anatolia were examined.

Birth Ceremonies

Beliefs and traditions compel people to follow certain customs starting from the pre-

pregnancy period and to perform the procedures required by the customs (Artun, 2001). Birth ceremonies vary from region to region.

When the newborn baby is visited throughout the Anatolia, the “*Lohusa sherbet*” is served. *Pita* or *chicken rice* and *ayran* alongside the *Lohusa sherbet* are treated to guests. In the same way, it is a long tradition to offer “*hedik*” which is boiled wheat when the baby's first tooth comes out (Güler, 2010).

In Çukurova region, for a good nutrition of a woman who has just given birth, a food called “*Yağlı-Ballı*” is made to get plenty of breast milk. For this purpose, molasses is poured into oil is burned, red pepper is sprinkled on it. *Liver salad* is another ceremony meal. Salad is made from liver and onions cooked in embers is fed to the puerpera. *Kaynar*: Until the fourth day of the woman giving birth, *Kaynar* is served the puerpera and guests. Seven types of spices such as cinnamon, clove, ginger, allspice are boiled for *Kaynar*. Walnuts and cinnamon are sprinkled on *Kaynar* before serving. *Yakı*: It is made to increase breast milk. *Yakı* is a slurry of molasses mixture with oil, sugar or honey. *Sugared Wheat*: Wheat is roasted, beaten, sugar is added. It is prepared for the puerperium. *Hedik*: It is boiled for the first tooth of the baby. *Hedik* is obtained by boiling wheat, chickpeas and beans (Artun, 2001).

Birth ceremonies are celebrated in Mengen which is in the Black Sea region in a very simple way. Birth is considered a reality of life. While going to visit the woman who gave birth, especially milk, milk soup,

sherbet, delight or egg is brought as a gift to strengthen the woman and to abound of breast milk. If the person's economic situation is good, after the birth, dinner accompanied with prayer is organized for quests (Yalçın Çelik, 2010).

In Ilgın, Konya, in the Central Anatolia region, melted butter with sugar is given to woman who gave birth in order to heal her wound. Previously, water was not given to the puerpera for three days after birth. Dried figs were served puerpera to increase breast milk secretion. Also, Paluze prepared by cooking starch with water and pouring rose water, Hira soup and Lohusa sherbet had served her. When the baby's first tooth comes out, a meal called Gölle is prepared. Wheat and chickpeas are thoroughly cooked. It was reported that when the wheat was boiled in the village of Eldeş, hemp was also put in it. Poppy seeds, walnut and peanut are sprinkled on Gölle. Guests who eat Gölle, put gifts such as beads and money into the plate (Işık, Kılıçarslan, Güldemir, Önay Derin and Barı, 2017).

In Nevşehir, after the birth, various nutrients are given to the woman to heal the wounds and provide plenty of breast milk. The neighbors go to visit the puerpera by making such dishes. A sweet soup called almond soup is drunk. Sweet foods such as walnuts, raisins, honey slurries, halva and Lokum are served. For increasing of breast milk production, bulgur soup, sherbet and apricot paste are fed with juicy food. Cold drinks are avoided. Meals are served with bread and tea (Güldemir and Işık, 2011).

In Antakya, Hatay, the woman who gives birth is offered a variety of foods. The goal is to provide breast milk for the mother that the baby needs and to heal itself biologically. In some regions, meat is served for milk to come in, in some regions dessert is given. Baklava is distributed to the neighborhood when the child is born. The dessert, which is also served to those who visit the baby, is an important way to share the happiness of the family with everyone (Türk and Şahin, 2014).

In Bingöl, there are some celebrations for newborns. On the seventh day of birth, meals, pastries, grapes, appetizers and fruits are prepared if the child is male. After the child's tooth comes out, a meal called "Hedik" consisting of wheat and chickpeas is made. Neighbors and relatives are invited to the house. Guests bring gifts to the baby and mother. When the child pulls teeth, wheat grains are poured over the head for getting the child's teeth intact (Irmak, 2016).

Wedding Ceremonies

Giving food during the wedding ceremony has special importance in Turkish Culinary Culture. In the past, the wedding owner offered meals to the guests coming to their home, nowadays people have begun to have dinner at the wedding ceremonies. It is seen that this situation continues in both forms (Güler, 2010; Özen and Adar, 2020). Wedding meals in Anatolia, where special dishes are served during weddings, vary due to the different local products grown in the regions. They are generally held as lunches but may be also organized as dinner in some regions (Ceyhun Sezgin and Onur, 2017). The most important feature of the wedding

ceremonies is that they are prepared and presented as banquet tables. Therefore, regardless of the financial situation of the person, these ceremonies and dinners must be held with a standard. Whatever the cost and burden of the person, tradition continues (Yalçın Çelik, 2010).

Generally, in Anatolian weddings, the meal which starts with soups such as Yüksük or Dügün soup, continues with the catering of various combinations of dishes such as keskek, chickpea with meat, pepper stuffed with meat, rice with chicken, rice with chickpea and Cacık, and ends with desserts such as Baklava, flour or semolina halva prepared at home (Ceyhun Sezgin and Onur, 2017).

It was stated that in past wedding events in the Aegean region, firstly, on the day of promise, börek was made and honey or tahini halva was put on it that means "eat dessert and talk sweetly". It was stated that the sherbet made by adding water to sugar and cloves use for sweetening was first served to those who came to the bride's house. It was indicated that all the meals at the wedding event were served as a row meal. Meals are served according to a certain order called "row meal" in feasts. Various numbers of dishes are served in order, depending on the nature of the invitation. After eating the meal in the same bowl, other dishes come according to the order system. First, the whole börek is put on the table, then a gap in the size of the plate is opened in the middle of the börek and the dishes are eaten by putting it in this gap. The soup, usually Tarhana soup, is served first for dinner. Main

dishes given at these ceremonies are Tirit, Dolma, bulgur pilaf, vegetable dish and okra, respectively. The compote is served after these meals (Çakıcı and Zencir, 2018).

In Çukurova region, wedding bread is cooked before the wedding. "Yüksük soup" is consumed as beginner at wedding meals. In order to prepare Yüksük soup, doughs have been kneaded in large bowls, a group of women roll out until obtaining a flat dough, then cut into pieces in a dumpling size called "manti" in Turkish, and another group close the dumplings. In large boilers, dumplings are poured into boiled water, after cooking process plenty of oil with tomato paste and mint is added. If desired, chickpeas are put in the soup and squeeze the lemon. One of the most popular dishes for wedding meals is "Ekşili köfte". Small meatballs are made after kneading and fining the wheat. Dumplings are thrown into boiled water with chickpeas. After the meatballs are cooked, the fried onion, oil and paste are poured, pomegranate sour, dried mint and spices are added. Pilaf with wheat and meat, beans with meat, bulgur pilaf or rice pilaf, stuffed eggplant, cabbage and leaf wrap dishes made on the wedding day are called "Davul Aşısı". Lastly, "Gelin Tatarı" is a kind of ravioli cooked on the wedding day (Artun, 2001).

In Anamur, Mersin, the groom and his family slaughtered a goat called "soğuş" in the mouth of the region. In addition to the whole meat, millet rice (Darı döğmesi) and keskek are made and they are also sent to the bride's family. This meat is split into pieces in the girl's house and served to the guests (Erdem Nas, 2015).

In Erzincan, banquet tables consisting of two different combinations are prepared for wedding dinners. The first menu is prepared with splash soup, babukko and compote, and the other menu is prepared with okra, stuffed grape leaf, grape paste, compote, rice, pastry, Sarı burma, Baklava, Zerde, stuffed lamb and rib (Ceyhun Sezgin and Onur, 2017).

In Midyat, the bride's mother prepares the first breakfast for the next day of wedding and sends it to the groom's house. In this breakfast table; special meals which are peculiar to Midyat such as stuffed ribs, stuffed lamb, Şambörek, Dobo, kibbeh, Aya köfte, Sembusek are present. The household starts to eat after the bride and groom tasting of dishes (Eroğlu and Sarıca, 2012; Toprak, Çelikel Güngör and Gürbüz, 2018).

It is stated that in Tokat province, which is located in the Black Sea region, the wedding dinner is prepared in cooperation with the neighbors and the bride's dowry goods are moved to the wedding dinner. The meal, which is described as a wedding dinner in Tokat, is given to those who come to the wedding owner's house. These dishes are usually Düğün soup, stuffed vegetables with meat, rice with meat and flour halva (Sağır, 2012).

The Mengen folk cuisine in the Black Sea region has an invariable menu for engagement, wedding and funeral dishes. This menu includes soup (Toygar, keşkek and lark lentils), meat roasting (Tas kebab/potatoes with meat), vegetable food (green beans/eggplant / dried okra), rice (plain butter/noodle/inner rice), pastry, salad, compote and dessert (baklava for

engagement and wedding, halva / bite for the dead) (Yalçın Çelik, 2010; Ceyhun Sezgin and Onur, 2017).

Wedding meals in Konya are usually served in the garden, at round table for 10 people or on ground tables. When the table is filled by the guests, first a round of 90 grams of bread and a spoon and fork are distributed for ten people. Then the soup with yogurt is placed in a large bowl (for ten people). At the end of the soup, rice with meat, semolina halva, okra soup, Zerde and cherry syrup are served, respectively. If a type of meal is liked (usually rice with meat), the service is repeated. The wedding dinner list given here is considered standard for moderate families. Depending on the economic situation, Su böreği (patty), stuffed grape leaves can be added to the menu (Bodur, Güler and Akman, 1996).

Funerals

Food is a social practice where entertainment and the joy of life are maximized with a passion for pleasure. Death, on the contrary, is a vital loss in which sadness and pain are maximized. The common point is that both phenomena have characteristics that dynamically structure the social sphere. People come together and in this meeting the sharing is maximized (Sağır, 2016).

All over Anatolia, it is a tradition to give food to guests during religious ceremonies. This meal is served to relatives, friends, funerals and neighbors both on the day of the deceased's funeral, and usually on the 40th day of death (Güler, 2010). Serenity prevails in the collective funeral dinners. Death comes

at an unexpected time. For this reason, the host is protected and watched by the neighbors while preparing the funeral dinner. For example, while weddings special cooks are hired, the principle of volunteering is essential here. Usually, there are kitchen and dining hall in the mosque in the village. The dishes are cooked and eaten here. Men and women eat the meal separately. For those who are too sick, old and painful to go to the mosque in the village square to eat, meals are sent to the houses with pots (Yalçın Çelik, 2010).

In the pre-Islamic period, the funeral of Turks is called “yog” or “yug”. It is known that Kaşgarlı Mahmud used it in *Divanü Lûgat-it Türk* as a meal given on 3rd day or 7th day after being buried dead. This tradition continued in the post-Islamic period. In these ceremonies, a variety of foods are offered to restore the soul of the deceased. Although the food distributed during the funerals varies according to the region, it usually consists of food types intended to satisfy the participants. These meals are also served on certain days (3rd, 7th, 20th, 40th, 52nd and the 1st anniversary) (Bayat and Cicioğlu, 2008). This dish has been practiced in different ways both in Anatolia and in the geographies of Turkish culture (Sağır, 2012).

The tradition of distributing halvah apart from food on certain days is a practice that exists in many Turkish communities as in many regions of Anatolia today (Bayat and Cicioğlu, 2008). On the anniversary of the death, halva is distributed in some places as well as preparing “Lokma” in some places, and in some places, it is seen that mevlits with meals or sugar are made (Sağır, 2012).

In Çukurova region, halvah is made at the 3rd day of the death and it is served to guests. At the 7th day of the death, those with good economic status, serves meat wrapped in yufka to guests. Some people give Lahmacun or wheat soup at these ceremonies. Today, food companies are also given food by ordering meals. Sometimes Aşure is served the guests at these ceremonies (Artun, 2001).

In Anamur, Mersin, the funerals are quite crowded, but the first three days are very important. In the funeral home, “dibek” is beaten and keskek, beans and rice are cooked in the boilers and served to the people who come to condolence. The aforementioned cooking is not performed by the host. It is made by relatives, friends and neighbors. Everyone coming to condolence will support the family who lost their relatives by bringing various meals to the condolence house for about a month. At the condolence house, the same meals are cooked for three days. On the 40th day, tea, biscuits or chocolates are served with the meal. On the fifty second day of the dead, “Bişi” is made and distributed. On the anniversary, tea, biscuits, sometimes meals or “Batırık” are served to people who come (Erdem Nas, 2015).

In Konya Ilgın, neighbors and relatives bring food to the funeral home. There is no cooking at home for a week to a month depending on the situation. In the past, on the day of the funeral, the neighbors used to bring breakfast foods. Nowadays, the host gives bread with meat (“Etlı Ekmek”) to those who return from the funeral. On the third day, the bagel called as “Pişi” is made and distributed. On the seventh day, Yasin-i Şerif is read and

food is given. On the fortieth day, flour halva or meal is given. Giving food is called as “Ekmek dökme”. On the fifty-second day, the mevlit is read, dinner is given as the wedding (Işık et al., 2017).

In Antakya, there are various practices related to death. At the first 3 days or 7 days, nobody cooks in the dead house, the stove does not burn. The family's friends, relatives and neighbors bring food to the funeral home as a sign of sharing pain. There are various traditions on the 7th, 40th, 50th and 52nd days of death. Some people sacrifice an animal and prepare food on the 7th day. This is called the 7th day dinner. On the 40th day, an animal is sacrificed, Lokum, halva and Lahmacun are shared with people. On the 50th day, food is prepared, or halva is distributed. On the 52nd day, Lokum and biscuits are distributed. As can be seen, there are many differences in the construction of the memorial days. The reason for this is the religious and cultural richness and diversity of Antakya (Türk and Şahin, 2014).

Conclusion

It is an important and special activity for Turks coming together and eating on special days. It has been determined that the meals prepared especially for births, weddings and funeral ceremonies have similar characteristics in themselves. It has been seen that the foods prepared and served for birth ceremonies are mostly rich in carbohydrates. This situation is thought to be related to the high energy need of the puerpera. Among the public, these foods are believed to increase breast milk. Although the dishes prepared and served at wedding ceremonies differ

according to the regions, it has been determined that they are generally more labor-intensive and attentively prepared meals. For funerals, it was determined that dishes that take a shorter time to cook and are easier to distribute were made.

The Turkish cuisine culture, which has its roots in ancient times, has its rich resources due to the spreading to a wide geography and is rich in diversity, is among the world's largest cuisines. Observations on Turkish culinary culture in recent years, it can be said that there are problems in transferring this cultural heritage from the past to new generations. Although Turkish culinary culture has a rich content and diversity, the components of this culture are being forgotten day by day. Both the globalizing eating habits and the conditions of modern life lead to the loss of some traditional habits. For this reason, it is important to carry out various studies to protect local elements and to transfer them to future generations. Against too rapidly changing of our cuisine with the process of social change, we should try not to lose the traditional rituals, ceremonies, habits, etc., to conserve them and to improve them in terms of tourism.

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