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Review Article

Turkish Culinary Culture from The Past to The Present

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Abstract

Food is the most important prerequisite for human survival. Societies have developed different food cultures over time due to their social, cultural, economic and religious differences. The Turks, who came to Anatolia from Central Asia, have a rich culinary culture due to their long historical background and accumulation. The Turks ruled Anatolia for centuries and were instrumental in the formation of the key factors that shaped Anatolian cuisine. When the Turks immigrated from Central Asia, they brought their traditions and customs with them. The Turks who settled in Anatolia added new food cultures to the old eating habits they encountered. During the Ottoman Empire, Turkish food culture brought together people from different classes and backgrounds and interacted with the food culture of many nations. In addition, technological developments and changing world standards play an important role in changing eating habits and cultures. The aim of this study is to examine the development of Turkish food culture in Anatolia from the first settlement of Turks in Central Asia to the present day.

Keywords: Turkish Cuisine Culture, Seljuk Cuisine, Ottoman Cuisine



Introduction

The eating and drinking cultures of societies are shaped by the region in which they live and form a culture by differentiating themselves in the process [4,17]. One of the reasons why Turkish cuisine is recognized as a known cuisine in the world is undoubtedly the nomadic life of the Turks in Central Asia and the continuation of nomadic and sedentary life in Anatolia [10]. The eating and drinking habits of the Turks are characterized by the main elements of agriculture and animal husbandry, which are the main source of livelihood for the Turks. With the practicality of nomadic life, the use of agricultural products in sedentary life, and the use of methods to extend the shelf life of food (fermentation, increasing the dry matter (adding salt or sugar and drying), both the shelf life and the variety of foods increased. This has resulted in a rich, diverse, and varied food culture [24, 3].

Central Asia, the first home of the Turks, and Anatolia, where they later settled, are rich in staple foods. Over time, foods from these areas have migrated to other parts of the world for various reasons, but each place has also developed its own foods characteristic of that place. Turkish cuisine is also so diverse because many cultures are influenced by each other, thanks to the country's multinational structure. Turkish food culture is as diverse as it's delicious, encompassing many types of food and drink, healthy cuisine, and even vegetarian cuisine. The Turks' relations with the Chinese Empire, their life in Central Asia, their adoption of Islam, and their interaction with the Arabs, as well as the influences of the civilizations that dominated Anatolia, such as the Hittite, Greek, and Persian empires, are of great importance for the emergence of Turkish cuisine [31, 16]. In this way, the Turks have created a rich food culture from Central Asia to the present day.

Turkish cuisine has its roots in Central Asia, Persia, the Middle East, and Anatolia and developed as a complex synthesis of these and other foodways as empires expanded. During the migration from Central Asia, the Turks brought their traditions and customs to the regions where they settled. The Turks who adopted Anatolia as their homeland retained their former eating and drinking habits, but encountered and were influenced by new and different cultures [10].

The centuries of Turkish rule in Anatolia, which were exercised by various empires and principalities, shaped and formed Turkish and Anatolian cuisine. The coexistence and intertwining with people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds during the Seljuk and Ottoman Empire periods are among the most effective factors that account for the richness of modern Turkish [6, 1].

The Turks played a role in controlling trade along the Silk Road with the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, which they established in India, and ensuring the safety of traders with garrison caravanserais, the so-called "ribats." The Turks themselves also traded mainly in leather, woolen textiles, and animal foodstuffs [19].

The cuisine of the Turks contained a variety of plant-based ingredients from Asia and India. They combined the ingredients brought from Asia with spices from Mesopotamia and meat, their main food source. In addition, they enriched their cuisine by adding seafood from the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to the diverse plant and animal foods of Anatolia [14, 2]. The rich culinary culture of the Turks is the result of the Central Asian nomadic people's diet based on fat-tailed sheep and meat and dairy products such as yogurt, butter, and cream, the grains of Anatolia, the rich fruits and vegetables of the Mediterranean region, and the spices of India and Asia [6, 17]. In order to better understand modern Turkish cuisine, which is now a mixed cuisine, it is therefore important to shed light on the Central Asian period, Seljuk and Principalities period, and Ottoman Empire periods [34, 11].

The aim of this review is to examine the development and interaction of Turkish culinary culture in the Anatolian regions from the first settlement in Central Asia to the present day. By dividing the Turkish culinary culture into four basic periods and limiting these periods to the cuisine, the aim is to examine which foods and dishes they consume the most in their kitchens and which cooking methods they use the most in the preparation of these dishes.

Cuisine of Central Asian Turks

Despite their nomadic lifestyle, the Turks practiced seasonal agriculture, horse breeding, and farming. It is known that they cultivated melons and grapes in the steppes of Asia and also herded flocks of sheep in an organized manner with horse-drawn troops [19].

The region in which they lived was one of harsh winters, hot summers, and dangerous deserts. Their experience in organizing large herds of horses and sheep in this difficult geography and their skills in archery on horseback are considered key elements of the Turks' state-building tradition of conquest. They not only used the plants that grew naturally in the regions they traveled to, but also cultivated those that were suitable for the local conditions processed them using techniques. Although various sources report that their agricultural life was limited to the cultivation of wild plants in the regions they traveled to, Kashgarli Mahmut wrote in his Divanu Lugâti't-Türk, one of the most comprehensive sources on Central Asian Turkic traditions; that carrots, melon, eggplants (butuge), radishes (turma), peas, broad beans, cucumbers, coriander, mint, blueberries, and mustard were cultivated, and that there was a wide range of foods, including herbs, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. In his dictionary, he noted that various cooking and preservation techniques (shish kebab, well kebab, roasting, and steaming) were practiced [33, 17, 19].

Although the Turks are known to eat horse meat, sheep is the most commonly eaten animal. Other animals consumed were camels, cattle, and goats. Milk was also obtained from these animals. The milk is consumed as milk, and fermented products such as koumiss, kefir, cheese, cottage cheese, and yogurt are also produced. They used different types of milk, such as colostrum (ağuz or avuz), curdled milk (bıştak or bışlak), and thickened milk (tarak or turak [26]. They consumed the colostrum by mixing it with dried meat [38]. Kımız, which is obtained by fermenting mare's milk, was one of the most important drinks of the Turks [5]. In addition, another drink, şubat (kımran), popular produced by souring camel's milk. These two drinks were mainly consumed in the summer months [38]. Yogurt was produced and stored in containers made of animal leather, wood or earthenware [30].

It was called yogurt or yavurt, and the fat was extracted from yogurt, not milk. They used the words insipid (yavan or yavgan) for skimmed yogurt. They used these words not only for yogurt, but also for skimmed meat [26]. The yogurt that was added to soups and dishes was called salted (tuzluk), and the word katık (added) was often used instead of yogurt, and "added" means to flavor dishes, especially soups, with yogurt. In addition to ayran (oyran or oren), they mixed yogurt with koumiss to make the drink kakırım [26]. In addition, yogurt dried in the sun was called kurut [37]. Cheese was a foodstuff that they produced in many variations and that, like yogurt, was obtained by fermentation [26]. Cheese, which was generally eaten fresh, was also preserved for a long time by draining the water to a certain extent and pressing it in animal leather [30]. The butter (kere or sağ) is separated from the tallow fat by strict lines [26].

Meat roasted in its own juice and oil (kavurma), roasted and ground millet (kavut), dried yogurt (kurut), dried butter, dried fruits (especially raisins, apricots, and melons) and grape molasses (bekmez), and

honey (called bee oil) can be characterized as canned foods used by nomadic Turks to prepare a nutritious meal in a few minutes [19]. It is believed that Central Asia, which is known to have always utilized the sourness of ingredients such as yogurt and cranberry juice, had an influence in making sourness a basic element of Ottoman and modern cuisine [19].

Wheat and noodles (eriste) have an important place in their diet, and products made from wheat flour are at the forefront. Paper-thin dough rolled out with a long thin needle (rolling pin) and baked on a round baking sheet, are called yuga, yuvga or yupka, yufka (phyllo) [19]. White bread was made from well-sifted wheat flour and even whitened by adding milk [26]. There are many types of bread called katma (crumbled bread), püşkel (thin bread like phyllo), sinçü (a type of bread between loaf and phyllo), esberi (bread cooked in ashes and chopped in oil), kuyma (bread with oil), çukmin (bread in the form of cookies, baked in steam), közmen (bread baked in embers), kakurgan (a type of bread kneaded with oil and baked in a tandoor), busgeç (tea bread), tokuç (tea bread), and kömeç (tea bread buried in ashes) [37].

The sweet melons from Central Asia became famous in West Asia in the ninth century and spread westwards to the Mediterranean region. Neither Persian nor Arabic had a name for the sweet melon, so the name melon (kharbuza and battikh) comes from the Central Asian Turks [19]. The Uyghurs are considered the pioneers and fathers of melon cultivation [26]. Grapes and viticulture have been known to the Turks since earliest times. The word "grape" appears in Turkish written sources from the Uyghur period onwards. Bor is a word used by the Turks for grapes and grape wine. Vinegar is also a term that has been known since the Uyghur period [26].

The noodles were cooked with minced meat and served with yogurt and garlic sauce, just like modern Turkish manti. In particular, Tutmaç, a noodle and yogurt soup that remained popular during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods and is still common in Turkish provincial cuisine, has also survived from the Turkish cuisine of Central Asia. With the exception of horse meat and kumiss, all foods have been staples of Ottoman and contemporary cuisine. A fondness for sour flavors persisted and became a distinctive feature of dishes such as soup and tutmaç.

It is known that tarhana, which contains a considerable amount of yogurt, was discovered and introduced into world cuisines by the Turks [8]. In addition, tarhana has gone down in history as the first known ready to eat soup.

Meat was also stored in the simplest way, namely by salting and drying in the sun. The most common name for dried meat is yazok meat (pastrami). It was an indispensable food for the Turks because, as a military and nomadic society, the Turks took pastrami, which has a low risk of spoilage and is very nutritious, almost everywhere they went, especially when they went on expeditions, and even consumed more pastrami produced in the fall than fresh meat in the spring [10]. The Turks mixed the meat, the precursor of today's sausages, with various spices they found in their regions and produced sausages by fermenting them in intestines, which were usually obtained from sheep intestines. Sucuk was made from brains, tail fat and blood or finely chopped roasted meat, rice and flour in two different ingredients [10].

In addition to animal-based drinks, they also consumed plant-based drinks. For example, "tarasun" is a drink obtained by mixing wine and koumiss as a result of the fermentation of millet [7, 17, 25, 10]. They produced "medus" honey wine, "camum" from barley, "begni" from millet and wheat and wine from grapes [25, 17, It is also known that the Hun Turks had a drink called "Io", which was made from yogurt, cherries and apricots and did not contain alcohol [22, 25].

Among the Turks, the traditions of eating together and sitting at the table as a

family originate from the Central Asian Turks [17]. On special days, religious or social festivals, or celebrations, food was served in a form specific to the theme [10]. For example, in Anatolia, cranberry (postpartum) sherbet is prepared and served to those who come to visit for childbirth, and another tradition is called postpartum halva or millet halva because ancient Turks believed that millet increases breast milk [18, 29, 17]. When the baby's first tooth erupts, a tooth-hediği (wheat boiled in water with chickpeas) is also prepared. This tradition is based on a shamanistic belief that has been handed down since Central Asia and is still practiced in various parts of These Anatolia. traditions are still the forerunners considered of the preparation of various delicacies for funerals, festivals, and holidays.

Cuisine of Seljuk and Principalities Period

The Seljuks led both a nomadic sedentary lifestyle. Since the geography in which they lived was favorable for agriculture, they began to engage in agricultural activities by settling down. The biggest factor in the fact that Seljuk food culture was shaped differently and was richer than in Central Asia is undoubtedly the fact that the Anatolian geography offers agricultural advantages in many ways. Under the influence of Islam, the meat and milk of animals such as pigs, horses, and mules were never included in Seljuk cuisine. The meat of these animals is also not included in today's Turkish food culture [9, 28].

Unlike in Central Asia, not only fruit and vegetables, but also countless fish and seafood influenced Turkish cuisine and brought about a profound change [12]. The animals whose meat they consumed most were sheep, goats, lambs, and wild animals, but they also ate fish and poultry. Seljuks also consumed the offal of animals (such as liver, heart, kidney, head, tripe, and intestines), which was usually cooked in

tandoori (stone or clay) ovens. They produced wheat, barley, oat, rye, bran, yufka, lavash and corn bread and, unlike Central Asian Turkish cuisine, ate these breads with every meal [10]. Of all types of bread, they prefer wheat bread the most and find it the tastiest. Bran bread is the least tasty bread. Black bread is made from barley or millet flour [26]. With the exception of yufka and lavash (pita) bread, all other breads were round [30].

The Seljuks were expert farmers who grafted peaches and sweet apricots onto apricot seed trees and grew melons out of season, and the word kavun, from the root kagun, is a Turkish word [27, 19]. The famous Kamereddin apricot was named after the Seljuk statesman and vizier of Sultan Alaeddin Keykubat, Kamereddin. These apricots were grown in the capital, Konya, dried and exported to Syria and Egypt. In the Middle East, the name Kamereddin is still used for apricot leather (amardeen or qamardeen) [19].

The Seljuks used yarma (a product obtained by beating wheat according to various processes) for the preparation of dishes such as toyga aşı, soup with yogurt, keşkek and aşure. Wheat that had completed its development was first beaten with a heifer, thrown to separate it from the chaff and moistened by lightly wetting it, then beaten with wooden mallets on stone dibeks, separating the bran and obtaining yarma, and bulgur was obtained by grinding the cooked and dried wheat between two stones.

Like the Turks of Central Asia, the Seljuks also consumed milk from sheep, goats, and cows. They also processed milk both as milk and into various dairy products such as yogurt, ayran, butter, kefir, kurut, koumiss and cheese.

Cuisine of the Ottoman Empire

During the six centuries that the Ottoman Empire existed, food culture in Anatolia brought together people of different classes and backgrounds. The most obvious reasons why this cuisine differs from world cuisines are its great diversity, the production of alternative foods from almost all ingredients, the absence of waste and, above all, the fact that it is a healthy cuisine [35].

Ottoman cuisine developed through the synthesis of Central Asian Turkish cuisine with the eating habits adopted from the Safavids, Abbasids, Byzantines and Seljuks [12, 19]. Despite many different and new factors, the meat and dairy-based dietary habits of the Turks, which resulted from their way of life in Central Asia and the geographical conditions, were also maintained in the Ottoman period.

The most glorious period of Turkish cuisine is the time of the Ottoman Empire. During this period, foreign dignitaries and foreigners who visited or lived in the Ottoman palace were impressed not only by the food but also by the produce grown [32, 21].

Turkish delight (lokum), which was originally a paste-like medicine, was prepared as a ready-made sherbet mixture with a thousand different fruits and spices during the Ottoman period and later became a sweet which spread all over the world [20]. The habit of consuming coffee, which originated in the Middle East, spread from Istanbul to Europe in the middle of the 16th century [20].

Ottoman cuisine should be divided into palace cuisine and folk cuisine. Although the folk cuisine was anything but sumptuous, it was varied and rich. Meals were eaten on the floor [10]. With the conquest of Istanbul, important changes were made to Ottoman palace meals. The consumption of seafood increased significantly during this period and food

rules were applied for the first time among the Ottomans [17]. These rules include washing the hands, mouth and nose before eating, not going to the invitations very hungry, using three fingers of the right hand while eating, not putting these fingers used as tools in and out of the mouth, starting the meal with the Basmalah, not showing too much appetite when sitting down to eat, and showing humility and behaving in accordance with the sunnah and morality at the table [23].

Meat did not lose as much importance in Ottoman cuisine as it did in the Turkish cuisine of Central Asia and Seljuk cuisine. While lamb and mutton were used in the kitchen, beef was preferred for making pastrami. Veal and beef found their way into the kitchen in the second half of the 19th century and were mainly used to prepare dishes for foreign guests. Products that were forbidden in Islam were not eaten by the Ottomans. They also consumed chicken, rooster, goose, duck, peacock, partridge and pigeon [10].

Desserts and sherbets were just as important components of Ottoman cuisine as meat and rice. Originally, sherbets were medicinal drinks that were made palatable by adding honey or sugar. Pomegranate, lemon, grape, violet, lotus, lily, tamarind, plum, myrtle, fig, mint, honey, rose, bitter orange, winter cherry, apple, quince and mulberry sherbets were consumed. Sherbets became a natural part of Ottoman gourmet culture [19]. In the 17th century, compote (hoşaf), which means pleasant water, was served at the end of Ottoman banquets before coffee [10]. Desserts were introduced to Ottoman cuisine from Central Asian Turkish cuisine, largely due to the adoption of Islam and increasing interaction with the Arabs. Halva, which means dessert in Arabic, corresponds to the kayut of the Central Asian Turks. Halva became a common dessert not only for the palace, but for all classes of the population [36] In the Seljuks, zerde, paluze and pelte, which were popular desserts, continued to be consumed.

Modern Turkish Cuisine

The changes in today's Turkish cuisine are due to the differentiation of the social structure. Some features of Turkish culinary culture maintain their identity despite technological innovations. It is seen that meat and meat dishes are the main course, meal starts with a soup, vegetable dishes are served next to the main course, dessert is consumed last, and salads, pickles and greens are both appetizing and garnish on the table [12]. The family table, the guest table and the tables for special days, which show continuity from Central Asia to the present day, are also maintained [13].

The region and the time in which they live have very important effects on the formation of the culinary culture of societies. Wars and migrations, trade and the development of technology were of great importance for the spread of food. With the facilitation of transportation and communication, our traditional dishes and cooking methods have also changed [28]. In particular, urbanization, population growth, technological progress, improved access to technology, convenience foods and tourism can be seen as important factors that play a role in the transformation of Turkish cuisine.

Conclusion

The roots of Turkish cuisine go back to the Turks in Central Asia. During this long process, Turkish cuisine has developed, changed and innovated in various ways. With the spread of new types of food through trade, wars, migrations and technological developments, people have tried and started to use different production and processing methods. Therefore, the transition to sedentary life, the arrival in Anatolia and the adoption of Islam had the greatest influence on the emergence of Turkish food culture. In addition, the Empire ruled over continents, was geographically vast and multicultural in structure, and Turkish cuisine, which has existed for centuries, flourished during the Ottoman Empire.

Especially in the Ottoman palaces, dishes were eaten with a variety and flavor that cannot be found in any cuisine in the world today.

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