

#### GASTROIA: JOURNAL OF GASTRONOMY AND TRAVEL RESEARCH

8(2), pp. 277-285, 2024 - ISSN: 2602-4144 Received: 09.07.2024 / Accepted: 28.09.2024 DOI: 10.32958/gastoria.1513046

# Beverage Culture in The Ottoman Palace Cuisine Osmanlı Saray Mutfağında İçecek Kültürü

Görkem Teyin<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Doğuş Üniversitesi, <u>gteyin@dogus.edu.tr</u>, ORCID: 000 0000-0002-1959-2603

#### ABSTRACT

Traditional Turkish cuisine has a very rich cultural accumulation with its food and beverages in the historical process from past to present. In the Ottoman period, which hosted the important processes in the shaping of Turkish cuisine, the infrastructure of many elements of culinary culture was created. One of them is the traditional beverage culture. The meaning of beverage or drink is the liquids obtained from food and prepared by adding some nutrients. The most important liquids mentioned in the Ottoman palace cuisine are; It consists of liquids such as water and flavored waters, coffee, boza, tea, salep, compote, hardalive and sherbet. When the literature is examined, it is noticeable that publications on Ottoman palace cuisine are limited in terms of beverages and that Ottoman beverage culture does not find enough place in today's gastronomy literature. In the study, which aims to provide information about the place, importance and types of traditional beverages belonging to the Ottoman palace cuisine, its also aimed to transfer the beverages in the Ottoman palace cuisine to future generations in order to increase their awareness and ensure their sustainability. Keywords: Ottoman cuisine, Palace cuisine, Turkish cuisine, Traditional beverages, Gastronomy.

#### öz

Geleneksel Türk mutfağı gecmisten günümüze kadar ki tarihsel sürec icerisinde yiyecek ve içecekleri ile oldukça zengin bir kültürel birikime sahip olmuştur. Türk mutfağının şekillenmesinde önemli süreçlere ev sahipliği yapan Osmanlı döneminde mutfak kültürünün birçok unsurunun altyapısı oluşturulmuştur. Bu unsurlardan biri de kuskusuz geleneksel icecek kültürüdür. İcecek; bazı besin maddelerinden elde edilen ve çeşitli katkıların eklenmesiyle hazırlanan sıvılar olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Osmanlı saray mutfağında adı geçen en önemli içecekler; su ve aromalı sular, kahve, boza, çay, salep, komposto, hardaliye ve şerbet gibi içeceklerdir. Alan yazın incelendiğinde Osmanlı saray mutfağı ile ilgili yayınların içecekler açısından kısıtlı kaldığı ve günümüz gastronomi literatüründe Osmanlı içecek kültürünün yeterince yer bulmadığı göze çarpmaktadır. Osmanlı saray mutfağına ait geleneksel içeceklerin yeri, önemi ve çeşitleri hakkında bilgi vermeyi amaçlayan bu çalışmada, aynı zamanda Osmanlı saray mutfağındaki içeceklerin sürdürülebilirliğinin sağlanarak gelecek nesillere aktarılması ve farkındalık yaratılarak tüketicilerin bilinçlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Anahtar kelimeler: Osmanlı mutfağı, Saray mutfağı, Türk mutfağı, Geleneksel içecekler, Gastronomi.

#### INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that culinary culture is shaped by geographical, ecological, economic, cultural etc. factors specific to the region and increases the level of civilization of states (Kesici, 2012). The Ottoman Empire had a very rich culinary culture due to its wide geography, deep-rooted historical background and cultural interaction with other states (Kuzucu, 2016). When it comes to culinary culture, in discussions of culinary culture, primary focus is often placed on food; however, beverages play a significant role, especially in the Ottoman palace cuisine. Water, coffee, sherbet, compote, boza, coffee, salep, hardaliye, tea, etc. It can be counted among the most familiar beverages served in the Ottoman Empire. (Kızıldemir, Öztürk and Sarıışık, 2014; Kuzucu, 2016). The fact that the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state was largely effective in limiting the consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially kumiss (Pedani, 2018). In the context of religious dimensions in Ottoman food culture, alcoholic beverages were not served at banquets and meals. Although there were communities that consumed wine in the Ottoman society, conversations with alcohol were excluded from the sacred ceremonial meals (Faroqhi and Neumann, 2016). Turkish cuisine has a very wide culinary culture with its traditional foods and beverages. Generally, liquids prepared from various nutrients, especially fruits and with the contribution of some flavorings are called beverages. These drinks are usually appetizing or often refreshing (Tezcan, 2000).

Ottoman Palace cuisine is a very delicious, nutritious and showy cuisine that has played an important role in the foundation of today's Turkish cuisine, and has been the subject of many written and visual sources from past to present. When the literature on the subject is examined, it is seen that written documents on Ottoman Palace cuisine generally write specifically about main dishes, stews, fruit dishes and banquet tables. In Ottoman Palace cuisine, great

importance was given to the drinks served with the meals on feast and banquet tables. So much so that even water, the most basic drink, is consumed by flavoring it with some flowers and plants in Ottoman Palace cuisine. In this cuisine, where there are quite a variety of drinks, drinks are as important as food. Due to the limited number of studies on Ottoman Palace cuisine in the literature, the study was undertaken in order to increase the number of written documents.

# **Conceptual Framework**

# **Beverages Culture In The Ottoman Palace Cuisine**

Drinks in traditional Turkish cuisine show quite a variety. There are drinks that are important both in terms of nutrition and health. Drinks consumed in Turkish culinary culture can basically be grouped as hot and cold drinks. The most common cold drinks can be listed as boza, sherbets and fruit juices. Drinks consumed hot can be counted as tea, coffee, linden, sage, cinnamon, milk and salep (Toprak et al, 2002). The most frequently consumed beverages in Ottoman Palace cuisine are water, coffee, sherbet, compote, boza, salep, hardaliye, tea, etc. is coming. It is seen that beverages are mostly consumed as refreshing, cooling and digestive.

## Water and flavored waters

Water, which is one of the most basic physiological needs of human beings, has a very important place in the Ottoman Empire. There are statements by Europeans stating that the Ottomans understand where the water came from which fountain only by tasting it (Kuzucu, 2016). It was thought that flowing water rather than stagnant water in the Ottoman Empire was more important for the human body (Uçar, 2020). It is known that in the Ottoman Empire, various water wells, cisterns, waterways, dams and aqueducts were built to bring water, which has various identities such as fresh water and drinking water, to the settlements. In addition, in the Ottoman Empire, there were people who distributed free water in the squares, bazaars and places where crowds of people were abundant (İlhan, 2008; Kuzucu, 2016). It is also discussed that in the Ottoman palace cuisine, water was consumed by flavoring it with various fruits. Especially frequently consumed lemon water is one of them. Lemon water is expressed as ab – lemon. It is also known that water is flavored with roses and consumed by adding fruit peels (Kızıldemir et al., 2014).

# Coffee

Folkloric accounts suggest that coffee was first discovered by animals. One day, an Abyssinian shepherd grazing his goats noticed that the goats were very active, constantly running and jumping from place to place, and he told the village elders about this situation. Thus, they discover the coffee that the goats ate that day. Coffee was consumed a lot by the dervishes in Abyssinia, because of the vitality it gives, the elimination of the desire to sleep and the stimulating effect (Kaplan, 2011).

Although the exact date of introduction of coffee into the Ottoman Palace cuisine is not known, it is stated that it first came to Istanbul in 1519 with Selim I's Egypt expedition. Thanks to the new cooking method discovered by the Turks, the coffee was cooked and served in equipment such as a coffee pot and a pot, and thus got the name of Turkish Coffee. In the Ottoman period, a very limited part of the coffee was able to taste the coffee in the period when the palace first entered. Coffee consumption increased rapidly, particularly as it provided a non-alcoholic alternative for Muslim communities following the ban on alcoholic beverages (Gürsoy, 2005; Bulduk & Süren, 2007). This habit transcended social and religious boundaries, spreading from the poorest to the wealthiest families, including Turks, Jews, and Greeks. Coffee was also started to be served to the guests frequently in the houses. While spoon halvah is served alongside coffee in Greek houses, the accompaniment of coffee is attributed as sherbet in Turkish houses (Bozis, 2020). It is also known that there was a coffee maker whose duty was only to cook coffee for the presentation and preparation of coffee in the palace (Kaplan, 2011).

It is stated that there is no evidence of the existence of coffeehouses and therefore coffeehouse culture before the 16th century. However, it is estimated that coffee was consumed as a beverage in Ottoman Istanbul in palaces, houses

and lodges even before. The Ottomans probably had the first evidence of coffee when they conquered Cairo in 1517. After this conquest, the first coffeehouses in Istanbul will develop as religious, commercial and educational centers, which are the living spaces of middle-class individuals, in a social environment similar to those in Cairo. It is rumored that the first coffeehouse in Istanbul was opened in Tahtakale, the most vibrant center of trade, by two people named Hekim and Shams, who came from Aleppo and Damascus (Değirmenci 2015; Ağarı, 2017).

The first coffeehouse was opened in Istanbul in 1555, after coffee became a part of the life of the people, whose consumption became widespread in the Ottoman Empire. Humphrey Coningsby, an English-born merchant and diplomat, during his Istanbul trip in 1559, defined coffee as a drink in porcelain cups, dark, between hot and warm (Bozis, 2020). In the Ottoman Empire, it is seen that the coffee houses where this delightful beverage is sold are located close to the mosques. For Muslim men, coffeehouses have been places where prayer times are expected and there is also an atmosphere of conversation. It has also been seen that many fatwas were published as a result of the interest in coffees in Istanbul (Ürer, 2010). Coffeehouses in Istanbul were inspected with a strict management and Bursa coffeehouses, which were subject to relatively less control compared to those in Istanbul, became a frequent destination for coffee lovers from Istanbul at that time (Yerasimos, 2011). As a result of the complaints from the Ottoman people and the debates about whether coffee consumption is halal or not, the coffee houses were built for the first time in III. It was closed during the Murad period (Kuzucu, 2016). Although coffee and coffee culture is a phenomenon loved by the public, it has taken its place among the drinks seen as haram and as a result, coffee and coffee houses have been banned (Çağlayan, 2012). Figure 1 shows a depiction of the coffee house in the Ottoman Empire.



Fig 1. Coffee council in ottoman (Akademik Tarih, 2023).

### Boza

It is known that the history of boza and beverages similar to boza dates back to before Christ. Boza, which is first seen to be produced and consumed in countries such as Egypt, African countries and Nigeria, has regional preparation styles and differences (Arıcı and Dağlıoğlu, 2002). Boza is a fermented beverage that is usually drunk in summer due to its cooling and refreshing effect (Birer, 1987). Boza is a traditional fermented beverage with a sweet-sour aroma and a dense, astringent odour. Written sources state that beer is also produced from boza. The presence of boza in the Ottoman Palace cuisine is related to both its use as a beverage and its use as a medicine. However, due to its high alcohol content, Boza consumption is also limited within the framework of Islamic conditions (Evliya, 1990; Samancı, 2016). Boza is a beverage produced from the flour of grains such as barley, millet, wheat, oats or from the flour obtained by mixing these flours (Ünsal, 2011). These grains are reduced to the size of semolina and then cooked in cauldrons. After the cooked ingredients are cooled, they are filtered and then sugar is added. After the sugar is added, a yeast is added, just like yogurt yeast, which is usually boza obtained earlier. It is fermented for a day at approximately 30°C. It is consumed cold within 1-3 days after cooling (Arıcı and Dağlıoğlu, 2002). It is stated that in the Ottoman Palace Cuisine, the sultan's favorite boza was made from millet. Especially the sultans of the period produced millet to be

used in boza production in Tekirdağ and the ones produced there were used. Boza was a beverage that was consumed in the palace as well as in the public table and that the army took with it when going on a campaign (Kuzucu, 2016). Since boza was a frequently consumed and preferred beverage in the Ottoman period, peddlers sell boza and it is stated that there are shops that provide an entertainment environment by establishing places called bozahane (Samanci, 2016). Figure 2 depicts a peddler selling boza in the Ottoman period. The Turks introduced the boza to the people of that region in different geographies where they migrated from Central Asia and laid the foundation for the geographical distribution of boza in today's sense. Boza, a traditional Turkish drink, has spread to the Balkans, the Crimea, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Egypt today (Levent-Cavuldak, 2017). Boza has been sold as a mobile for centuries as well as in the shops where it is sold. Tatar Gypsies and especially Albanians became communities especially interested in boza making during the Ottoman period. It is known that boza sellers, who go out for sale on the streets after dark, especially in the evening, in autumn and winter, make sales by shouting in the streets with their own unique mani. Although boza was accepted as halal in the Ottoman period as a religion, the religious authority always kept a distance from boza (Ceylan, 2007).



Fig 2. Peddler of boza in the Ottoman (İgüs, 2016).

# Теа

When tea is mentioned in Ottoman Palace cuisine, linden and sage come to mind instead of black tea, unlike today's. Since sage and linden are frequently found in the Ottoman lands, their consumption is also common. Black tea is imported, but it is not preferred very often. It is common for sage to have antiseptic properties, for linden to be consumed by wealthy families at breakfast and served to special guests (Kuzucu, 2016).

Black tea consumption is encountered in the Ottoman Empire after the Tanzimat period. It is seen that tea, which was used before the Tanzimat period, was generally used as a medicine. In addition, the consumption of tea has led to the introduction of many new tools such as ewers, teapots and samovar into they kitchen (Kuzucu, 2008).

### Salep

Salep is a tuberous plant with straight and long leaves originating from West Asia. Salep, which belongs to the Orchidacea family, is very common in regions such as Kastamonu, Muğla, Antalya, Silifke, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman, Malatya, Van, Muş, Bitlis (Sezik, 1967; Baytop and Sezik, 1968). The word salep is written as "sa'leb" in Arabic and it means fox. Salep is also referred to as "Husyet-ül sa'leb" or "Husyet-ül kelb" in old books (Şen, 2017). Salep entered Turkish cuisine in ancient times. In the 8th century, together with Islam, drinks such as salep, boza and cider were often served instead of alcoholic beverages such as wine and kumiss. Especially, consumption of salep has been observed in the winter months. It is seen that the consumption of salep is also common in the Minister and the Middle East regions, which were within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, before coffee became widespread (Tekinşen, 2006; Yılmaz, 2015; Süren and Kızıleli, 2021).

Salep is also included in the kitchen notebooks where the pastes cooked for the sultans are recorded in the Halvahane section of the Ottoman kitchen. It is known that most of the pastes such as misridat paste, philosophers paste, refreshing substances paste contain salep to a large extent (Çalışkan and Kurt, 2019). When the records of the Ottoman palace cuisine regarding salep are examined, it is known that an equipment with a lid and a handle, called a saleplik, was used as a cup (Pala, 2010). In the records of Evliya Çelebi's travel book about salep, it is stated that there are nearly 200 itinerant salep sellers in Istanbul (Çalışkan, 2018). Figure 3 shows visuals of a salep seller and a salep glass in the Ottoman Empire.



Fig 3. Salep seller and salep shop in the Ottoman Empire (Çalışkan and Kurt, 2019).

# Compote

The word Hosaf is formed by combining the words 'hosh' and 'ab'. It means pleasant water. Although not much water is consumed during meals in the Ottoman palace cuisine, compote is consumed alongside dry meals such as börek and rice (Şavkay, 2000). Hosaf is prepared by mixing dried fruits with water and sugar and cooking, then cooling and spreading (Işın, 2010). Compote and compote are often confused with each other. Hosaf is made with dried fruits, while compote is prepared from fresh fruits (Şavkay, 2000). It is stated that there were special compote bowls in the Ottoman palace kitchen and that these vessels were made of materials such as porcelain and silver. It is stated that compotes and compotes on the table are made from special products in the local regions within the Ottoman borders. Apple, plum, pear, grape, quince, halva squash, zerdali, orange, pistachio, taflan compote are some of the compotes served in the Ottoman palace cuisine (Hatipoğlu, 2014).

# Hardaliye

Hardaliye is a non-alcoholic fermented and quite healthy functional cow (Coşkun, 2017). It is also a beverage created by fermenting materials such as fresh grape juice, cherry leaves and mustard seeds (Bayındır and Önçel, 2019). Although there is no clear evidence of when the mustard entered the Ottoman cuisine, there are first findings that it was drunk during the reign of Suleyman (Kuzucu, 2016). Hardaliye is a fermented traditional local beverage that has been produced and consumed for centuries in the Thrace region of Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first President of the Republic of Turkey, recommended Hardaliye as a national drink due to its taste and health benefits (Aktaç, Hasköylü and Güneş, 2015).

# Sherbet

Sherbet is the name of the beverage obtained as a result of combining fruit pulp, flowers or spices with water and sugar. In the Ottoman palace, sherbets are produced in Helvehâne, an important part of the palace cuisine (Ağarı, 2017). Sherbet is one of the drinks consumed with meals in the palace cuisine. Sherbet is a refreshing drink prepared from various flowers and fruits and consumed cold. It is stated that for sherbet, which is a beverage preferred in the summer months due to its refreshing feature, there are people in charge of the palace and sherbet is served periodically (Sepken-Yar, 2008). Sherbet; it has been a beverage used for therapeutic purposes as well as accompanying meals as a thirst-quenching, refreshing, refreshing drink (Sürücüoğlu, 1997). It is stated that the word sherbet derives from the word 'şarba', which means 'to drink' in Arabic (Yılmaz, 2012).

While preparing sherbet, it is obtained by boiling the juice obtained from the fruit with sugar or adding sugar and honey to the fruit juice. Sherbet is a beverage consumed after cooling. While the rich cuts generally use sugar as

sweetener in the making of sherbet, honey, molasses, etc. are used in the folk cuisine. used is indicated. It is known that sherbet was made in the helvahane in the Ottoman palace cuisine. Sherbet is seen as a very important phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire. It is a beverage that is traditionally served to the guests in every house. It is even stated that sherbet is drunk instead of water, and instead of jugs, there are special pitchers containing sherbet. It has been observed that it is especially served at banquet tables as well as being served daily or served to guests (Bilgin and Samancı, 2008; Sarıoğlan and Cevizkaya, 2016).

Sherbets prepared in the Ottoman palace cuisine are generally rose, jujube, rose-lemon, mulberry, violet, water lily, daffodil, quince, quince leaf sherbets. Flowers are often used as flavoring sherbets as well as the main ingredient. In addition to flowers, plant roots, seeds, leaves and bark are also used by subjecting them to certain processes. Medicinal uses of sherbet have also been found. For example, vinegar and honey syrup prepared with vinegar has been used to treat many diseases. Similarly, tamarind syrup has been used for cleansing the blood and licorice syrup has been used for many medicinal purposes. It has been reported that violet sherbet is used in the treatment of cough and pain and the healing properties of pomegranate sherbet are also used (Ceyhun-Sezgin, 2017; Ceyhun-Sezgin and Durmaz, 2019).

Sherbets, which are at least as important as main dishes in Ottoman tables, contain many fruits, flowers, herbs, etc. indicated to be obtained from the mixtures. Grape sherbet, Rose sherbet, Honey melon sherbet, Orange sherbet, Lemon sherbet, Mint sherbet, Tamarind sherbet, Carob sherbet, Reyhan sherbet, Sirkencubin sherbet, Liquorice sherbet, Postpartum sherbet, Cranberry sherbet, Cranberry sherbet Sübye), Gelincik sherbet, Licorice sherbet are among the most frequently made and consumed sherbets in Ottoman palace cuisine (Özdoğan and Işık, 2007; Samancı, 2008; Yerasimos, 2010; Hatipoğlu, 2014; Sarıoğlan and Cevizkaya, 2016). Figure 4 shows sherbet sellers and depictions of sherbet sales in the Ottoman Empire.



Fig 4. Sherbet seller and sherbet sales depiction in the Ottoman Empire (Bilgin, 2020).

# METHOD

This study is a compilation study conducted to reveal the beverages consumed in the Ottoman Palace cuisine and present them in an academic order. Descriptive and literature review techniques were used as data collection methods in the study. The study is limited to sources that examine beverages made and consumed in the Ottoman palace cuisine and scanned with academic databases. The importance of the study is to increase the number of academic studies that include the compilation of beverages made and served in the Ottoman Cuisine and to contribute to the literature.

# RESULTS

When the historical process of Turkish cuisine is examined from past to present, it is a rich cuisine that has an important place in the world in terms of food and beverages and its unique cultural elements. Ottoman palace cuisine is famous for its elegance and ostentatiousness, as well as its various delicious dishes and drinks. The interaction of Ottoman cuisine with other nations, the geopolitical position of its lands, and the fact that it contains east-west synthesis cultures played a major role in the enrichment and diversification of the culinary culture. The study focused on the non-alcoholic beverages prepared and consumed in the Ottoman palace cuisine during the Ottoman period. As a result of the study, it was seen that various drinks were prepared and consumed in the Ottoman palace for medical purposes. Ottoman palace

drinks were consumed for various purposes, including as digestive aids, refreshers, thirst quenchers, or as an alternative to water.

In the study, water, flavored water, coffee, boza, tea, salep, compote, hardaliye and sherbet were discussed as Ottoman palace drinks. Although it was seen that water consumption was limited in the Ottoman period, it was observed that water was consumed by flavoring it with fruits such as lemon. It was emphasized that coffee and coffee culture had a special importance in the Ottoman Empire. In addition to being a beverage served to guests and consumed in friendly assemblies, coffee also provided the formation of coffeehouse culture. Coffeehouses are described as places where group conversations are made and time is spent, where coffee is often drunk. Boza and salep are the drinks that are consumed especially in the winter months. It is reported that there were peddlers selling boza and salep during the Ottoman period. Compote is a delicious liquid obtained by boiling fruits with sugar. It can be consumed alone as well as with food. Sherbet was perhaps the most important beverage in the Ottoman period. Sherbets, which have a wide variety, are made from countless fruits, flowers, seeds and even bark. Sherbet culture has a special importance in the Ottoman Empire. There are vendors selling sherbet and sherbet head. Sherbet was considered one of the most consumed elite drinks of the Ottoman cuisine and was offered to every important guest.

Although traditional beverages that are frequently consumed in the Ottoman palace cuisine are relatively consumed today, they are phenomena that need to be kept alive more often in order to keep our culinary culture alive, to transfer it to future generations and, above all, to be sustainable. Today, our traditional drinks have been largely replaced by acidic beverages. This situation is far from traditional and poses a problem for health. Although the production and consumption of traditional beverages is more common in some regions of Anatolia, it is possible to mention that the beverages consumed in the Ottoman palaces are on the verge of being forgotten. In order to increase the amount of consumption of our traditional beverages, activities to increase production should be directed, and these drinks should be included in promotion and advertising campaigns. Tourism, Gastronomy, Cookery, etc., where universities provide hospitality services. Gastronomy history, beverage culture, etc. taught in the departments. Traditional drinks in Ottoman palace cuisine and Turkish cuisine should be included in more detail in the lessons. In order to spread the traditional beverage culture, scientific meetings such as conferences, panels, symposiums can be organized on these drinks, as well as activities such as festivals in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Like all the details of the Ottoman palace cuisine, its drinks are also an important attraction. These beverages can serve as significant cultural attractions in touristic destinations. In a final statement, effective studies should be carried out to ensure that this beverage culture, which has survived to the present day and is extremely valuable, is transferred to future generations and is sustainable, and it should be ensured that it continues to promote history and the past with endless gratitude.

The benefits of the drinks, which are consumed in the Ottoman palace cuisine, are quite wide in terms of both nutrition and health. Drinks consumed can be of different structures and tastes, especially due to their cooling and digestive effects. With the influence of Islam, beverages are prepared, consumed and served mostly without alcohol. In this direction, it is striking that the subject of fermentation is thought-provoking due to the fact that it contains alcohol. Boza and hardaliye are some of the examples that can be given to this situation. Although it is seen that the consumption is non-alcoholic, the Islamic authorities in the Ottoman Empire find them thought-provoking. It is stated that beverages such as coffee, compote, tea, salep and sherbet do not pose a problem in terms of alcohol since they are not fermented products. Sherbet seems to have a special place in the Ottoman palace cuisine. In addition to being served to every guest, it is seen that a wide variety of sherbets are served in daily meals and banquets. The Ottoman Palace cuisine, which is very rich and nutritious in this state, is also a part of a great culture with the drinks it contains. The reflection of very tasty and nutritious drinks, which can appeal to all segments, continues and is seen from the past to the present. Sustainability of these and similar cultural phenomena, their transfer to future generations, are important in terms of keeping the palace cuisine culture alive. It should not be forgotten that cuisine and food culture unite all nations and civilizations.

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