



# TIMELESS

## TOURS & TRAVEL

FOR THE DISCERNING TRAVELLER

## Turkish Food and Where to eat in Istanbul

### DECIPHERING A MENU

Turkish food is rich in flavours belying the commonly held belief that it resembles Middle Eastern cuisine or all comes down to kebabs.

Turkey offers a rich variety of fresh produce: the Ottoman Empire is the reference for the cuisine in which meat, especially lamb, played an integral role. Turks devour lamb, minced beef, raw meat dishes (çiğ köfte), sausages (sucuk) and even tripe (işkembe) and sweetbreads (uykuluk). Seafood dishes are also key; no surprise in a country surrounded by seas. Fresh fish, caught daily, are simply grilled and sprinkled with salt. Meze are the highlight of the cuisine. Essential starters, they make for a generous meal on their own, washed down with raki and enjoyed in good company.

Turks love long meals but thrive on cooking for the rushed: many esnaf lokantası (tradesmen's restaurants) offer ev yemeği (home-cooked meals) and a Turkish-style buffet. Young chefs, back from studies abroad, are updating traditional fare using local seasonal ingredients in an Istanbul-style Farm to Table movement. And Istanbul's delicacies are everywhere from Ottoman dishes to street food, hip new restaurants to holes in the wall, foodie havens to experimental bistros. But for most Turks, their mother is always the best chef.

The Turkish word for starter, başlangıç, is usually used to describe hot or cold appetizers, and the word arasıcak usually refers to a hot appetiser only. Ana yemek is the term used for a main course and tatlı means dessert. Used throughout the region, meze is the general term used to describe all types of appetisers. In Turkey, they bring colour to every meal. They can be brought on a wooden tray for you to choose from or simply placed on the table. It is always a good idea to ask for the menu, however, especially at seafood restaurants, where they may try to cook up far-fetched prices for fresh fish.

You'll find the word patlıcan (eggplant) very useful, as the vegetable is a favorite in Turkey, especially as a meze such as patlıcan salatası, a silky puree of smoked eggplant with olive oil and lemon. You will also find it stuffed, stewed and smoked, and it is a permanent fixture at seafood restaurants, along with beyaz peynir (Turkey's answer to Greek feta) and kavun (melon) washed down with raki. Other patlıcan appetizers are şakşuka (fried slices of eggplant in tomato sauce) and köpoğlu (pan-fried eggplant cubes and green peppers mixed in garlicky yogurt). Yogurt itself, a Turkish staple, is also used very often in meze.

Many meze consist of vegetable dishes called zeytinyağlı. The vegetables are cooked in olive oil, sprinkled with lemon juice and served cold. Among the most popular zeytinyağlı dishes are enginar (artichoke heart), pilaki/barbunya (broad beans cooked with tomato sauce), kereviz (celery root often cooked with a splash of orange juice), taze fasulye (fresh beans), pırasa (leeks) and taze bakla (fresh lima beans). Sarma (wrapped) and dolma (stuffed) are also typical cold meze; the first consists of grape leaves and sometimes cabbage, stuffed with rice, onion, spices, currants and pine nuts; the second refers to all sorts of vegetables (small peppers, onions, eggplant) stuffed using the same mix.

You'll find lots of meze at seafood restaurants: *ahtapot* (octopus), *kalamar* (squid) and *karides* (prawns) are served as cold salads or grilled. *Lakerda*, cured bonito, is a local delicacy, served with a wedge of red onion; the same goes for tarama (buttery, salty fish roe). Turks love meat, so they adore kebabs. The kebab ritual is called *ocakbaşı*. After meze, order hot appetizers such as *findık lahmacun* (a mini Turkish pizza, topped with ground meat, chopped tomato and parsley) and *içli köfte*, known as kibbeh in the Middle East. These are meatballs covered in a crispy bulgur wheat shell and filled with spiced ground beef and walnuts.

For dessert, menus will feature *kadayıf* (like baklava) and *krem brule* (*Crème brûlée*) alongside *ayva* (quince) and *kabak* (pumpkin) cooked in syrup topped with *kaymak* (local double cream).

Turks often say that the world's three essential cuisines are French, Chinese and Turkish; whether or not you agree after visiting there, there will be a lot of enjoyment in the experience.



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## Eminonu, Sultanahmet (The Old City), Edirnekapi

### HAMDI (Kebabs)

**\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Tahmis Cad. Kalcin Sok. 17 Eminonu (near Galata Bridge) Tel: 0212 528 03 90*

The restaurant's popular terrace views of Galata Tower and Golden Horn add to the location's convenience and you can move to the cosy sark (oriental-style seating area) for your after-dinner cup of coffee or tea.

House specialties include erikli kebab, minced meat from suckling lamb where all the fat has been cooked out and the showcase testi kebab, a stew of diced meat, tomatoes, shallots, garlic, and green pepper cooked over an open fire and served tableside by breaking the terra-cotta pot.

Hamdi also caters to vegetarians with the vegetable kebab, spiced with parsley and garlic; don't pass up the yuvarlama, a flavourful yogurt soup with tiny rice balls served only at dinnertime.

### CAN OBA (Fish Soup)

**\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\* \*\*Closed on Sundays\*\***

*Hocapasa Mah., Hocapasa Sok. No. 10 Sirkeci, Sultanahmet Tel: 0212 522 12 15*

Tucked away among the Sirkeci tourist traps, this unsuspecting little restaurant offers a sophisticated menu that is a pleasant surprise given the neighbourhood. The fish soup is one of its classics, but ask the chef and owner Can Oba for advice first before choosing as the menu is highly seasonal.

### ASITANE (Ottoman)

**\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress smart\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*In the Kariye Hotel, Kariye Camii Sok. 6, Edirnekapi Tel: 0212 635 79 97*

Taking recipes directly from records of meals at Topkapi Palace, the chef of Asitane has succeeded in re-creating the ingenuity of the Ottoman cooks. The menu changes from summer to winter including one in honour of Fatih Sultan Mehmet (the Conqueror) from May to June, while vegetarian main course selections are on the menu year-round.

### GIRITLI (Greco-Turkish tavern)

**\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Keresteci Hakki Sok. No. 8 Cankurtaran Mah., Sultanahmet Tel: 0212 458 22 70*

Nestling in a quiet street near Sultanahmet away from the tourist hordes, this *meyhane* (tavern) is masterfully run by Ayse Sensilay who gets her supplies every morning before dawn in Kumkapi, the city's largest market. Once inside the *kosk* (traditional) wooden house), have a good look at the traditional décor and painted ceilings on the first floor and the chequered red and white tablecloths in the shady garden.

The Sensilay family arrived from Crete in 1905 and grew up among Greek, Jewish and Armenian minorities so it's only natural to find recipes handed down by their ancestors, including *patates salatasi* (potato salad with molasses and onions) and *giritli meze* (small green olives, feta cheese and walnuts) along with fried squid, grilled octopus and fish – sea bass, red mullet, bonito – depending on the day's catch and the season. There's no choice (except at lunch) so you eat a fixed menu with drinks that ends with an assortment of Turkish-Greek desserts and a house liqueur.

### BALIKCI SABAHATTIN (Seafood)

**\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Seyit Hasan Kuyu Sok. No:1 Cankurtaran – Eminonu 0212 458 1824*

Balikci Sabahattin offers a unique dining experience. Waiters present diners with platters of meze, fresh fish and seafood selections from which to choose. The available fare changes almost daily.

### FINE DINE ISTANBUL (Turkish & Ottoman Fusion)

**\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Arcadia Blue Hotel, Dr. Imran Oktem Cad. No:4 Sultanahmet Tel: 0212 516 96 96*

Fine Dine Istanbul offers elegant dishes of fusion cuisine for those who like Ottoman and Turkish cuisines. The restaurant has also a magnificent view of the Old City, Sultanahmet which significantly increases the joy of meals taken at the restaurant. If you want to try something different while including tastes from Ottoman and Turkish cuisines at the same time in the Old City, Sultanahmet; you can make your reservation at Fine Dine Istanbul and have a quite nice experience. The roof terrace might be available to enjoy a drink accompanied by even a more extensive view.



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## Taksim, Tunel, Beyoglu, Karakoy

### MIKLA (Turkish & Mediterranean)

**\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress smart casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*The Marmara Pera, Mesrutiyet Cad. No. 15, Beyoglu Tel: 02 12 293 5656*

With Mikla, Istanbul Food & Beverage Group's goal is to stretch "consumer's senses" to their upper limits by combining quality food and beverages with the elements of exquisitely relaxing design and distinguished music. It is a Mediterranean restaurant with the clear emphasis of Istanbul and Scandinavia. Mikla offers a perfect opportunity to those who want to experience contemporary Istanbul lifestyle in the heart of the old city. Mikla comprises an indoor 100 seat restaurant and bar, a 140 seat outdoor restaurant located on two separate terraces plus an additional level with a stunning bar and rooftop pool on a third terrace. Mikla is located on the top two floors of The Marmara Pera Hotel in the historic Pera district with its outstanding view of Istanbul, including a bird's-eye view of the historical peninsula, the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus.

**Food Concept:** Refined Mediterranean cuisine and innovatively recreated Turkish cuisine.

### MEZE BY LEMON TREE (Mediterranean)

**\*\*Moderate/Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations necessary\*\***

*Asmalimescit Mahallesi Mesrutiyet Caddesi 83/B Beyoglu 02 12 252 8302*

With subtle tastes and flavours, the young Turkish chef and owner, Gencay, will take you through a gourmet tour of the region and of Ottoman history through the medium of delicious mezes with a fusion of Turkish herbs.

### NICOLE (Gourmet & Minimalist)

**\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations necessary\*\* \*\*Closed on Sundays and Mondays\*\***

*Tomtom Suites, Bogazkesen Caddesi, Tomtom Kaptan Sokak No.18, Beyoglu Tel: 02 12 292 44 67*

If there is a gourmet reason to visit Istanbul, dinner at Nicole is it. Overlooking the Old City in the distance, this minimalist, top-floor restaurant is anything but pretentious. Behind the kitchen window, chefs Kaan Sakarya and Aylin Yazicioglu busily compose an enticing seasonal menu that changes every six weeks; exquisite dishes are made exclusively using organic produce from local farmers and such markets as the Ferikoy Organic Market and carefully prepared with local seafood, meat and free-range poultry. The bread, ice cream and chocolate are all made or baked on the premises for a complete gourmet experience. In an array of vibrant colours, reinterpretations of classic Mediterranean and Turkish dishes speak for themselves - salad of carrot, feta, cumin and citrus; goose with beetroot, quince and rosehip *jus*; lamb served with white bean stew, salsa verde and samphire. The tasting menus pair your meal with Turkish wine. Unique.

### TABLA ISTANBUL (Neo Turkish, contemporary)

**\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Mesrutiyet Caddesi No. 67, Tepebasi, Pera, Beyoglu Mobile: 0539 696 17 01*

Tabla Istanbul is run by a chef used to working in Michelin-starred restaurants who decided to combine this valuable experience with a love of Turkish street food. Whether it's the classic Adana kebab or a simple soup, you're sure to be delighted by the interesting take he puts on his dishes. 'Comfort food' doesn't really have a direct Turkish equivalent. This should not come as a surprise considering its nuance – a food with an emotional connection that has the ability to make you feel good. Tabla Istanbul, without making such bold claims, does exactly this, serving traditional and familiar Turkish guilty pleasures while adding special extra flavour that makes the palate revel in pleasant surprise. This is exactly the kind of modern twist we've come to expect from chef Cihan Kıpçak, since his time at the Gile and Akali restaurants. To design the menu, Kıpçak took inspiration from the quick snacks and lunchtime treats that line any Turkish street as his intention is to serve simple meals to enjoy at leisure. The kitchens are run by Melih Demirel who has worked in renowned restaurants in the US such as Gramercy, Daniel, French Laundry and Istanbul's much loved Gile. Demirel has personalized each dish and given them original names hinting at a personal story.



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#### **JASH (Armenian)**

*\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress Casual\*\* \*\*Reservations Recommended\*\**

*Cihangir Caddesi No. 9 Tel: (0212) 244 3042*

Jash, which means “food” in Armenian, is tucked away in one of the many small streets of Cihangir, one of the coolest districts of old Istanbul on the slopes from Taksim to the Bosphorus. This Armenian restaurant is in a very suitable location in the Soho of Istanbul, known for some of Turkey’s finest cafes and restaurants.

Serving classical Armenian dishes with a warm, inviting environment, this young, small, cosy restaurant with its antique décor is surely a must.

#### **KARAKOY LOKANTASI (Diner, chic)**

*\*\*Moderate/Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\* \*\*Closed at noon on Sundays\*\**

*Kemankes Cad. No:37/A, Karakoy P: 0212 292 44 55*

Karakoy may be neighbourhood on the rise compared to Eminonu, but Karakoy Lokantasi places it even further ahead when it comes to meyhane (a traditional meze restaurant). Turquoise ceramic tiles inspired by the famous restaurant Pandeli in the Spice Market, starched white tablecloths and brass light fittings create the timeless chic of a favourite local spot. Always buzzing, the restaurant is filled with regulars, businessman and young hipsters. The wrought-iron staircase lends vitality to the space and the wide marble bar, lined with shelves groaning with raki bottles, remains the centre of attention. There you can order fillets of bonito in oil, sea-bass ceviche, artichoke hearts and vegetable meze (peppers, eggplant, cardoons and cucumber).

Displayed in a colourful assortment in a refrigerated glass cabinet, these starters sit alongside the catch of the day and baked octopus. Karakoy Lokantasi will be as much a vibrant feature of this district tomorrow as it has always been.

#### **MA’NA (Turkish Tavern)**

*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual-chic\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Kemankes Caddesi No. 53/8, Karakoy Tel: 212 293 09 93*

There’s something nostalgic about this lovely meyhane, or Turkish tavern, in the heart of fully reviving Karakoy. On the bright walls, maps and lithographs evoke the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire and its once distant borders. The scattering of odd, bargain-hunted objects gives a warm character to this neighbourhood hangout seating about sixty and lit by an imposing chandelier dating to 1838. You can eat fine traditional meze prepared up to the minute to ensure their quality and freshness – a flagship of Turkey’s rich cuisine. There is a wide choice, but go for the famous enginar (artichokes cooked in olive oil), topik (mashed chickpea, onions, red currants, cumin and tahini), mucver (courgette fritters with dill yogurt) or a very fine sigara boregi (melted cheese wrapped in filo pastry). Not to mention the yaprak sarma, tasty vine leaves stuffed with rice, species and cinnamon. If you like offal, the ciger (beef liver with herbs and spices) is also a must. The selection of thirty types of raki – the aniseed liquor that is to Turkey what ouzo is to Greece – helps brighten it all up.

#### **FERAHFEZA (Contemporary Mediterranean)**

*\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Union of Architects’ building, Kemankes Cad., No. 31, 5th floor, Karakoy Tel: 0212 243 51 54*

Karakoy, Istanbul’s hip up-and-coming neighbourhood, is a hotspot for creative types, where gallery spaces are opening up and the restaurant scene is exploring new ground. Designed by I-AM Istanbul, a Turkish design company founded by Emre Kuzlu and FerahFeza with offices in Istanbul and London, overlooks the neighbourhood and the Golden Horn merging the best of two worlds from its fifth-floor terrace. Run by the team behind the successful Leb-I Derya, the establishment mixes brass countertops with Tom Dixon’s Etch suspension lights in the bar area, oak panelling and wood plank floors in the main room, and warmly upholstered brown-and-grey chairs and banquettes.

The coppery mesh ceiling gives the whole place an industrial look, but FerahFeza feels airy nonetheless. On the terrace concrete walls with metallic panelling and sleek grey marble slates reflect the sky, mimicking the deck of an elegant yacht. Serving local fare with a contemporary twist, FerahFeza updates classics such as delicious samphire served with red cabbage, roasted eggplant with truffle oil, casserole of grilled octopus over beans, and aged tulum cheese sourced from a small Anatolian village. For trendy types, this spot is creating a stir, perking things up even more in Karakoy on Thursday evenings with live jazz gigs.



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#### **BALTAZAR (Burgers & steaks)**

**\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Kilic Ali Pasa Mescidi, No. 12/A Karakoy Tel: 0212 243 64 42*

Custom-designed for carnivores only, no dishes – not even salads - are served without meat in this cosy meat and drinks restaurant. There is even a huge ox drawn on a slate above the open kitchen, with the name of each cut of meat in Turkish and English. A showcase just beside it displays the same pieces of bright red meat, aged to perfection. The walls are brick, the geometric tiles have a good patina, and a metal bay window opens in summer on to the local life of a small street. There, old faces and trades try to hold out against the rapid transportation of Karakoy into a hipster haunt. Sit at one of the tables picked up second-hand from nearby Cukurcuma. Young regulars tuck into a starter of grilled onions, the house kofte, the Baltazar burger (with caramelized onions and smoked cheddar) or a delicious fillet lokoum - the Turkish name for the thinnest and tenderised piece of beef. As velvety as Turkish delight!

#### **AHESTE (Vibrant & bohemian)**

**\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\* \*\*Closed on Sundays\*\***

*Meşrutiyet Cad., 107F, Şişhane Tel: 0212 245 43 45*

Opening onto a paved street in trendy Galata, Aheste (meaning “slow” in Ottoman Turkish) takes slow food seriously. Home baked bread, market fresh organic vegetables, spices from the Antakya area, bouquets of wild flowers on the tables and in terracotta containers show Aheste’s commitment to respecting natural cycles and seasons. The half-dozen tables, decorative ceramic tile floor, deep chesterfield and the backlit silhouette of a tree on the entrance wall all invite you to take your time. Steep yourself in other cultures as the young owner Sara Tabrizi prepares unique dishes from her own Turkish-Iranian origins. Try the spicy rice pilaf with dried fruit, artichoke salad, hazelnuts and tulum cheese, the tandoori-cooked lamb and the tabbouleh with pomegranate along with other dishes from Greek and Armenian traditions.

## **Besiktas, Harbiye, Nisantasi**

#### **SIDIKA MEZE RESTAURANT (Aegean, Mediterranean & Turkish)**

**\*\*Moderate \*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\* \*\*Closed Sundays\*\***

*Şair Nedim Cad. No:38 Beşiktaş, Istanbul Tel: 0212 259 7232*

Sidika (also the name of the restaurant’s owner) serves salads and pastas, but it’s the restaurant’s Aegean-style mezes and sea-food dishes served with an array of traditional herbs and spices which attract a crowd. The restaurant’s simple, warm décor and relaxing music is definitely a different style. The owner and chef, Sidika, chooses the freshest ingredients for all recipes and as an environmentalist, all glass, plastic and cardboard waste at the restaurant is recycled.

#### **BOGAZICI BORSA RESTAURANT (Ottoman/Turkish)**

**\*\*Moderate/Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress smart\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\***

*Lutfu Kirdar Kongre ve Sergi Sarayı (Istanbul Convention & Exhibition Centre), Harbiye 0212 232 4201*

Borsa is at the city’s important international Convention Centre hosting many important events. Delegations can enjoy a view of the Bosphorus plus beautifully prepared dishes from all over Turkey. Dating back to 1927, Borsa is an important brand in Turkish cuisine hence why such weighty guests are welcomed here.

Borsa serves Ottoman and Anatolian fare. Among the hot starters, you should certainly try *keskek* which is a dish known for being served at Anatolian weddings. It is made of neck of lamb and wheat that is beaten and cooked over a very low heat for hours.

These are followed by meat dishes such as grilled, double-boned, thick lamb chops served with village-style fried potatoes and chard, *begendili kebab* and lamb *tandır* served with *ic pilav*. Another meat option is a mixed plate of Anatolian style kebabs from the Southeastern provinces. The “Urfa”, “Adana”, aubergine and lamb shish kebabs are served with bulgur rice, vegetables and *lavas*, a regional bread.

Among the classic desserts are *ekmek kadayifi* with clotted cream, *tavuk gogusu* sprinkled with cinnamon and served with clotted cream, ice cream or chocolate soufflé again served with ice cream, but you simply must try the hot semolina *helva* made with cinnamon, orange and plenty of nuts.



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#### **HUNKAR (Turkish favourites)**

*\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Mim Kemal Oke Cad., No. 21 Nisantasi Tel: 0212 296 38 11*

An institution since 1950, Hunkar serves the very best traditional Turkish cuisine in a modern setting decorated with street signs from two former locations before moving to Nisantasi, Customers choose from among the specialties prepared by chef Feridun Ugumu which are lined up behind a display window. You must try hunkar begendi, sautéed beef on a bed of mashed smoked eggplant, as well as seasonal dishes such as yaprak sarma with grape leaves (or lahana sarma wrapped in blanched cabbage leaves) stuffed with rice, spices and minced beef and served warm with a spoonful of yogurt. For desserts, check out the shop windows with their kazandibi, a cream of caramelized milk and kabak tatlisi, a slice of pumpkin confit sprinkled with crushed walnuts. A must - visit Istanbul restaurant.

#### **Along The Bosphorus**

#### **BANYAN (Asian Fusion)**

*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual smart\*\* \*\*Reservations not necessary\*\**

*Muallim Naci Cad. Salhane Sok. No.3 Ortakoy Tel: 0212 259 90 60*

Banyan ostensibly serves Asian fusion but the emphasis is on variations on Thai fare. Dishes from different parts of the world are transformed through use of Asian spices and cookery. The restaurant has an airy decoration and is just right for people who like to linger a little longer after a meal and enjoy the ambience.

#### **RUBY (Mediterranean, Turkish, Japanese)**

*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Casual-chic\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Yildiz Mah. Salhane Sok. No.5 Ortakoy Tel: 0212 327 28 44*

Managed by chef Ertan Özturan, Ruby's kitchen offers not only food but a unique journey through flavours of Mediterranean and Turkish cuisines. A delicious menu headlined by sushi prepared by Itsumi, gives the best Japanese flavours in Turkey. Opening its doors to a spectacular Bosphorus view daily at 5pm, Ruby redefines entertainment. After a delicious meal in a garden above the sea or on a panoramic balcony you can go to upstairs or downstairs nightclubs to dance. Enjoy Istanbul's reflection on the Bosphorus while sipping from a wide selection of wines or Ruby-exclusive cocktails prepared by award-winning bartenders.

#### **KIYI RESTAURANT (Seafood)**

*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress smart\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Kefelikoy Caddesi 126 Tarabya Tel: 0212 262 0002*

Tarabya was famous as an 18th and 19th century resort when Istanbul aristocracy of Stamboul came here to spend the summer months. Opened in 1964, Kiyi has become a culinary institution for its discerning clientele. Timber panelling and Kiyi's private photograph collections from all over Turkey give the restaurant with a warm, intimate atmosphere and clubby feel. For those unable to linger over a traditional lunch, the selection of hot and cold mezes presents a daily selection of fresh fish and seasonal produce.

Kiyi presents Heads of Turkish State and society glitterati with the landmark cuisine of Tarabya. Blue fish and Turbot are the most delicious fish from the Black Sea and Bosphorus. Tub garnard from the Black and Marmara Seas, sole from the Marmara and seasonal red mullet from Black Marmara and Aegean Sea.

#### **BALIKCI KAHRAMAN (Seafood, local favourite)**

*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Casual-chic\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Iskele Cad., No.15 Rumelikavagi Tel: 0212 242 98 99*

In a seaside neighbourhood far from the centre bordering the Bosphorus and Black Sea, Balikci Kahraman is a phenomenon. It is expensive but it's worth every minute of travel and every cent. A no-fuss interior sets the tone with fishnet hanging from the ceiling and photos of celebs and local notables who frequent it. The owner, Kahraman, a life-long fisherman, could write a book on kalkan (turbot), a flat fish Turks love. Some of the best come from the Black and the Marmara Seas. Though available year around, kalkan is best from January through March when it gets fatter and juicier in freezing cold water. Don't miss the meze: delicious bread, baked on site and cornbread with anchovies, almost as decadent as the silky kalkan liver. Try the popular meze midye tava (local pan-seared mussels), served golden and crispy with homemade tarator (a condiment made with stale bread, walnuts, garlic and yogurt). Piece de résistance, kalkan tandir or turbot tandoori, is slowly baked to perfection. Though inland, it is usually full especially on Sundays afternoons.



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**TAPASUMA (Innovative Turkish “Mezzes” and Seasonal Fish Dishes)** on the Asian side of the city  
*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Casual-chic\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Kuleli Cad. No.43 Cengelkoy P: 0216 401 13 33/34*

Tapasuma, on the eastern Çengelköy shore is the newest addition to Sumahan on the Water, a restored nineteenth century Ottoman distillery. Executive Chef Gökay Çakıroğlu builds upon the best of seasonal fish dishes with a unique twist on modern Turkish and Mediterranean cuisines to provide a contemporary culinary dining experience. A striking 8 metre long marble bar displays innovative Turkish “mezzes”. Ideal for daytime business lunches, intimate dining or to watch the sunset Tapasuma is beautiful and convenient. Access is by a charming launch, Sumahan I, linking the European shore to Tapasuma’s private dock. An unforgettable experience in a cosy atmosphere overlooking an exceptional view. Tapasuma was coined from the combination of two words “tapa” and “suma” that emphasise the building’s historic identity. “Tapa” is a stopper to cap a bottle by cork, glass etc while “suma” means unadulterated spirit. The location was the distillery for the high proof ingredient for “rakı”, the famous Ottoman tipple.

**ISMET BABA (Traditional, Seafood)** on the Asian side of the city

*\*\*Expensive\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Carsi Cad., No. 1/A Kuzguncuk Tel: 0216 553 12 32*

Named after its founder, Ismet Baba is timeless and has overlooked the Bosphorus since 1951. Décor is simple, there is no music, food is no-nonsense and long-standing staff wait on a distinguished crowd. The city’s movers and shakers are repeat guests whether for a date, dinner with friends or a power lunch. Do as Turks do and enjoy a wedge of feta and melon served with a first round of rakı – an inseparable companion to the beloved drink. The menu features a delicious smoked octopus salad, lakerda (cured bonito) and potato borek (lightly fried wheel of filo dough filled with potato and cheese). Trust your waiter’s suggestion for catch of the day and its preparation: old-fashioned Ismet Baba is among the best.

## Kadikoy, Moda, Uskudar – Asian side of the city

**CIYA SOFRASI (Traditional diner)**

*\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Caferaga Mah., Guneslibahce Sok. No. 43, Kadikoy Tel: 0216 330 31 90*

This popular place has been in a pedestrian street in Kadikoy district since 1988 but there’s nothing special to indicate to the passer-by that this is genuine treat for the taste buds. Well off the tourist track, it serves hard-to-find specialties, such as chicken and rice timbales baked in wafer-thin pastry, soup flavoured with artichoke and saffron, lamb and zucchini, or sweet chestnut and garlic. Not to mention delicious candied vegetables (eggplant, olives, tomatoes, pumpkins with nut cream, bitter orange), best washed down with thyme-scented tea. Dishes from Mesopotamia, the Balkans and Asia are brought together under the eye of Musa Dagdeviren, Ciya Sofrasi’s reputed chef and owner, who also runs two other local restaurants, Ciya and Ciya Kebab II. Apparently, Ciya can mean “unattainable summit”. Well, they sometimes reach it here.

**KOCO (Traditional tavern)**

*\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Moda Cad., No. 171, Kadikoy Tel: 0216 336 07 95*

This Greek tavern doubles up as a Byzantine prayer corner dedicated to St. Catherine, which attracts devotees from the area. People come to this local institution mostly for the meze and fish.

**KANAAT LOKANTASI (Traditional, Ottoman)**

*\*\*Moderate\*\* \*\*Dress casual\*\* \*\*Reservations required\*\**

*Selmanipak Cad., No.9 Uskudar P: 0216 553 37 91*

Having dinner at Kanaat is rather like taking a Turkish cooking course. Not only can everything be tasted -and indeed it should - but the bubbling cooking pots are enough to make anyone want to don an apron and get behind the stove themselves. Although the décor is spartan, the rich aromas waft their way into every corner to make it special. Established in 1993, this place alone is worth making the trip across to the Asian side of the Bosphorus. After sumptuous meze followed by a specialty meat dish, such as elbasan tava (beef with vegetables and cheese), be sure to leave room for the delicious dessert. Standing moist and plump beneath their glistening sugary surface, they are a treat for the eye as well as the taste buds. Surrender to keskul, rice pudding with almonds, apricots and figs, thickened with kaymak buffalo cream.



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# TIMELESS

## TOURS & TRAVEL

### FOR THE DISCERNING TRAVELLER

## Wine Grapes of Turkey

**Öküzgözü** This precious grape originated in Elazığ and Malatya provinces. The grape, which ripens from mid-September to mid-October, is large and black in colour. Öküzgözü was used for wine making and as a table grape by Armenians for thousands of years. Wines made from these grapes have soft tannins, high acidity, good balance, richness and elegance. They reveal red fruit (cherry, sour cherry, jam), black mulberry and earthy aromas. Öküzgözü can produce wines for immediate drinking or aging.

**Çalkarası** Çalkarası is one of the grapes grown in the Aegean region of Denizli-Çal. Vines grow in the low fertile, clayish, chalky, sandy soil of the tablelands of Denizli district, 750-1200 metres above sea level. The area is also affected by a Mediterranean climate. Çalkarası, a light-coloured, fleshy, juicy red grape is mostly used in rose production. Once matured, its acidity is very good. The aromas of wine produced from Çalkarası are strawberry, raspberry and rose. The wine is well balanced, fruity with medium to high acidity.

**Kalecik Karası** Kalecik Karası is a central Anatolian high-quality wine grape which is grown in Kalecik district in Kızılırmak basin. Kalecik Karası is a round, bluish-black, thin-skinned wine-grape. Wines produced from this grape are medium intensity and red in colour revealing pronounced red fruits aromas with low to medium tannin and high acidity. The most pronounced aromas of the grape are strawberry, raspberry and cherry. They are suitable for aging in oak barrels. The maturation and aging process in the oak barrels imparts a complex aroma of spice, dried fruit and coffee. This grape is suitable for making both young and aged wines.

**Narince** Narince is an indigenous Anatolian grape variety originating in Tokat. Tokat is a transition zone where the Black Sea climate ends and turns into continental climate. Citrus fruits (orange, grapefruit, lemon), pear, mineral (limy-earthly) and floral (white flowers) aromas are pronounced for Narince. Narince is an exceptional Anatolian white grape that can be matured in oak barrels. Wine produced from the Narince grape has a richness, creaminess and good balance.

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