



TURKISH GASTRONOMY: BOUNTIFUL CUISINE WITHOUT BORDERS

“Food is everything we are. It’s an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma. It’s inseparable from those from the get-go.”

-Anthony Bourdain

It is often said that few things bring people together in such a positive way as food. Gathering at the table together enables us to put aside our differences and, instead, appreciate the rich cultural heritage and unique identities of different countries.

Nowhere is this more evident than during SATW Conventions, when culinary tourism joins with our members’ many other motivations for travel to inspire friendship and goodwill among each other, and with our host destinations. It is through our shared meals in both familiar and exotic environments that we come to deepen our understanding of the different cultures we are experiencing together.

The upcoming convention in İstanbul (with optional pre- and post-conference visits to other regions in Türkiye) will provide SATW members with yet more remarkable gastronomic experiences that encourage bonding, socializing, and connecting at table.

Arriving in İstanbul can be a mind-blowing experience, as visitors find themselves quite literally perched at the geographic intersection of Europe and Asia. Today, residents and travelers can have breakfast in Europe, consisting many small plates, both sweet and savoury, accompanied by bread and graced with çay (Turkish black tea) served in traditional tulip-shaped glass cups, quickly cross the busy Bosphorus Strait (separating the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara) and have lunch or dinner in Asia.

Because Türkiye sits at the crossroads of southeastern Europe and western Asia, the country enjoys a unique geographic position that historically has served as hub and transit point for international trade, cultural exchange, and culinary cross-pollination. The vast diversity and dynamism of Turkish cooking originates from this flux, but most especially from access to a vast selection of vegetation, and a rich imperial history that has spanned centuries and civilizations. Turkish cuisine is a rich and diverse blend of flavors and ingredients, influenced by the country's location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Turkish cuisine has three essential features: traditional, healthy, and zero waste. Authentic Turkish cuisine is a magical journey to explore. Fresh and local produce meets traditional recipes, cooking techniques, and modern ways of presentation. Traditions are at the core of Turkish cuisine. Turkish cuisine has a lot to offer beyond the classic Kebap varieties, such as soups, stews, fish and seafood, and vegetarian and vegan options. It is famous for its use of herbs, spices, and fresh ingredients and for its balance of sweet and savory flavors.

Türkiye is home to several gastronomic hubs, known as "Gastrocities," where food enthusiasts can discover a treasure trove of flavors and culinary diversity.

Embark on a culinary odyssey through Türkiye's gastrocities, where every meal is a celebration of flavors, culture, and hospitality. Whether you're exploring ancient ruins, relaxing on pristine beaches, or wandering through vibrant bazaars, Türkiye's gastronomy ensures that every bite tells a delicious story of tradition and innovation.

Türkiye's restaurant scene has garnered international acclaim with MICHELIN-starred establishments and Gault Millau-awarded restaurants dotting its culinary map. Türkiye boasts a vibrant culinary scene that combines traditional flavors with innovative techniques, earning recognition from prestigious culinary guides like MICHELIN Guide and Gault Millau. These guides serve as compasses for food enthusiasts and travelers seeking exceptional dining experiences, highlighting restaurants that excel in creativity, quality, and service.

Discover innovative fusion cuisine, exquisite tasting menus, and warm Turkish hospitality at these acclaimed dining destinations. Whether you're a local food enthusiast or a curious traveler, exploring these restaurants in Türkiye promises unforgettable gastronomic adventures that celebrate the artistry of Turkish cuisine.

REGIONAL SPECIALTIES



Within Türkiye, different regions each have their own food specialties and traditions. Some examples include:

- Marmara Region / İstanbul: international, traditional, fusion/ “modern” Turkish, and street food.
- Aegean Region: olive oil, edible herbs, artichokes and seafood.
- Mediterranean Region: vegetables, herbs, fish and olive oil.
- Black Sea Coastal Region: anchovies, hazelnuts, corn and Turkish black tea.
- Central Anatolian Region: wholesome, hearty dishes like lamb or chicken combined with wheat or barley stew.
- Eastern Anatolian Region: hearty, flavorful dishes, often made with meat, yogurt, and fresh herbs.
- Southeast Anatolian Region: distinct spices and flavors such as mint-flavored soup made with red lentils, bulgur, pepper paste.

FOOD FAVORITES

Even with the vast variety of dishes on offer in İstanbul and throughout the country, there are standouts that jump ahead of the less familiar. Many of these dishes are available as street food. Some examples include:

- **Doner Kebab**, often called the “national dish of Türkiye” (seasoned meat stacked in the shape of an inverted cone and turned slowly on a vertical rotisserie)



- **Manti** (Turkish dumplings stuffed with seasoned ground lamb or beef, served with yogurt and butter sauce)



- **Meze** (an assortment of small dishes, dips, and spreads, such as white cheese, hot pepper paste, thick strained yogurt, cold aubergine salad, artichokes, cucumber and garlic-based yogurt, meatballs, and vine leaves stuffed with rice and vegetables)



- **Turkish Delight or Lokum** (traditional sweet confectionery flavored with rose, lemon, orange, pomegranate, mint, nuts, or lavender)



- **Kumpir** (baked or roasted potato mashed and mixed with different toppings)
- **Menemen** (breakfast dish of spicy eggs with oil, tomato, peppers, and spices)
- **Lahmacun** (Turkish flatbread topped with minced meat and spices)
- **Baklava** (A sweet pastry made with layers of phyllo dough, syrup, and nuts, typically served as a dessert. It is a geographical indication from Gaziantep underlining its importance in Turkish cuisine and beyond.)
- **Iskender Kebap** (thinly spiced lamb or beef served over pide bread with tomato sauce and butter sauce)
- **Balik Ekmek** (called “Fish Bread” – grilled fish placed in a baguette-style bread)
- **Gozleme** (traditional flatbread with various fillings)
- **Imam Bayildi** (vegetarian dish made with eggplants and stuffing)

POPULAR BEVERAGES

- **Raki** (Turkey's national drink, made with twice-distilled grapes and flavored with anise)
- **Turkish Coffee** (characterized by its fluffy foam, rich dark coffee, and the slight bitterness of ground beans, served with a cold glass of water to cleanse the palate. A Turkish proverb

says, "A cup of coffee has 40 years of respect". A strong, unfiltered coffee, traditionally brewed in a cezve (a small pot) and served in small cups. Listed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage value, a cup of Turkish coffee comes with an intricate fortune-telling tradition.)

- **Turkish Tea** (sourced from tea plantations in Rize, located in the eastern Black Sea region. Turkish tea is also inscribed in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List)
- **Ayran** (a refreshing buttermilk drink made by adding water to plain yogurt)
- **Turkish Wines** (Türkiye has long been regarded as the homeland of viticulture and the earliest wine culture in the world. Türkiye has several excellent spots to have a wine-tasting adventure. Urla, Cappadocia, Thrace, Bozcaada, and Mesopotamia are some of the best places to go. Special routes are designated through these destinations for those interested in viticulture and delicious wines.

Türkiye is home to several indigenous grapes such as Boğazkere, Öküzgözü, Kalecik Karası, Çalkarası, Papazkarası, Sultaniye, Narince, Emir, Bornova Misketi, Foça Karası, Hasandede, Vasilaki, Yapıncak, and Karalahna that make flavourful wines. Local Turkish cheese such as Divle, Obruk, Kars Kaşarı, and Kars Gruyere, and cured meat called pastırma are very well paired with these tasty local wine varieties. The country's unique wine routes offer a captivating voyage through lush vineyards, historic wineries, and picturesque landscapes. Urla Wine Route in Aegean Region includes also Michelin Green Starred Restaurants contributing sustainable gastronomy. Please visit:

<https://culturaljourneys.goturkiye.com/vineyards-of-anatolia>)

Olive Tree Route: CHASING THE WAY OF OLIVE TREE

Olive and olive oil have a long history in our land. In Türkiye, olives are produced in the Aegean, Marmara, Mediterranean, and Southeastern regions. 75% of olive trees are located on Türkiye's Aegean coast.

<https://culturaljourneys.goturkiye.com/olive-tree-route>

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