

M. ÖMÜR AKKOR

# KOMİLİ TRAVEL BOOK OF FLAVORS III

WITH ÖMÜR AKKOR



Translated by  
Elizabet Narin Kurumlu

*Komili*



VEYSEL KAYA









MELEK KAYA

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**Komili Travel Book  
of Flavors III  
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**Author**

M. Ömür Akkor

**Translator**

Elizabet Narin Kurumlu

**Photography**

Hasan Uçar

Mahir Baki

Mehmet Can Alkaş

Melek Kaya

M. Ömür Akkor

Murat Bakmaz

Murat İbranoğlu

Ruken Sönmez

Semih Ural

Uğur Bulut

Veysel Erbin

Veysel Kaya

Yasin Çetin

Zihni Güler

**Graphic Design**

Haluk Sönmezer

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***Komili***





VEYSEL KAYA



ZİHNİ GÜLER

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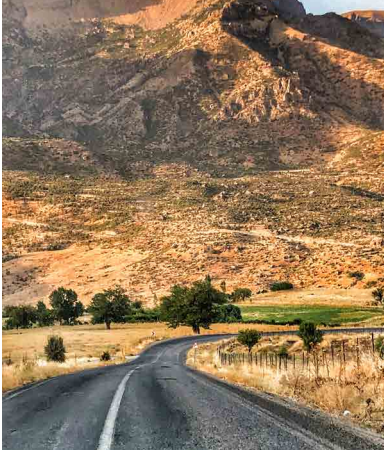
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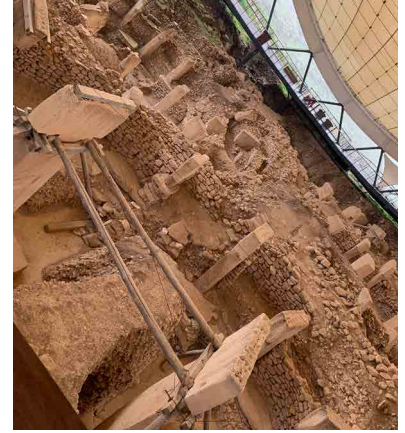
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# Muhammed Ömür Akkor

He is a graduate of the University of Uludağ, Department of Economics. Currently, he is attending the University of Anatolia (Anadolu Üniversitesi), Department of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. He is teaching Anatolian Culinary History, Ottoman Cuisine and Turkish Culinary History classes at the University of Eastern Mediterranean (Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi), Department of Gastronomy.

The oldest excavation site in Turkey is Alacahöyük, where excavations have been carried out the last 105 years. He is part of the Alacahöyük excavation workshop team as a chef, and he has been re-creating 4000-year-old recipes. In this capacity, he happens to be a pioneer; the one-and-only culinary chef that is commissioned as part of a team of antiquities excavations.

He has traveled to all 81 cities of Turkey within the last 20 years to carry out work on the cuisine of Turkey, and he has been participating in the so-called project, "250.000 kms for the Turkish Cuisine", which is still going on with a new adapted name: "350.000 kms for the Turkish Cuisine".

## Documentary Work;

His documentary film "A Life Lived as a Master: Ömür Akkor" has been broadcasted on TRT Documentary Channel.

## TV Programs;

He has two separate culinary TV shows, which are being broadcast on different channels of TRT; "*Komşuda Pişer*"<sup>1</sup> ("Cooked at the Neighbor's Home"), which has been translated into five different languages, and "*Keşf-i Lezzet*" ("The Discovery of Taste"), which has reached 240 episodes, and exceeding.

He has directed the culinary parts of the TV programs "*Deryalı Günler*" ("Your Days with Derya") on Show TV Channel, and "*Derya'nın Dünyası*" ("Derya's World") on Kanaltürk TV

<sup>1</sup> "*Komşuda Pişer*" is a partial use of the expression, "*Komşuda Pişer, Bize de Düşer*", which translates into "If something is cooked at the neighbor's home, we will have our share of it." It points out to an old tradition and a cultural feature of the Turkish society: sharing.

Channel, which are being broadcast once a week for the last five seasons.

He has produced the TV programs "*Bademiçi'nde Bir Ömür*" ("Ömür in Bademiçi")<sup>2</sup> and "*Ömür Akkor'la Hayatın Tadı*" ("The Taste of Life with Ömür Akkor") for broadcast on Olay TV.

Another production he has created is "*Güzel Bir Yer, Güzel Bir Tat*" ("A Nice Place, a Nice Flavor") for Line TV.

## Publications and Articles

He has written over two hundred articles relating to culinary culture, which has been published in local and national printed media.

His articles on culinary culture and travel have appeared in monthly publications such as Food in Life, Gourmet & Styling, *Yolculuk* (Journey), *Uçuş Noktası* (Flight Point), *Olay Trend* (Event Trend), *Dergi Bursa* (Magazine Bursa) and some other local magazines, and he is still contributing.

## Moreover...

He is a professional paragliding pilot. He has participated in World Cup Preparations, Championship of Turkey and various other competitions relating to this field. He is the founding captain of "Stratus Team" which is the first paragliding team of Bursa, and one of the founders of Bursa Paragliding Association (BUYAP).

He holds the 42nd place in the Cup of Turkey and the 110th in the World Cup Preparations.

He conducts and teaches at seminars and courses abroad on "Healthy Food", "Turkish Cuisine", "Culinary Culture" and "Anatolia's Oldest Dishes".

<sup>2</sup> The author's first name "Ömür" translates to "Life" in English. Therefore, the title refers both to "Ömür in Bademiçi" and "A Life in Bademiçi".

### M. Ömür Akkor Books

- The Cuisine of Bursa (*Bursa Mutfağı*)

- The Cuisine of the Seljuks (*Selçuklu Mutfağı*)

#### **(Gourmand Cookbook Awards, Best Culinary History Book in the World, 2012)**

- Pleasant Aromas are Spreading out from the Kitchen (*Mutfaktan Güzel Kokular Geliyor*)

The very first cookbook of Turkey written in Braille alphabet for the visually impaired

#### **(Best Fundraising and Charity Cook Book in the Europe, 2013)**

- The Old Taste of Anatolia (*Anadolu'nun Eski Tadı*)
- Healthy No-Sugar Desserts (*Sağlıklı Şekersiz Tatlılar*)
- Practical Recipes from the Turkish Cuisine (*Türk Mutfağından Pratik Tarifler*)
- Recipes with Eggs from the Ottoman Times to Today (*Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Yumurtalı Tarifler*)
- European Recipes with Eggs (*Alafranga Yumurta Tarifleri*)
- Ottoman Cuisine (*Osmanlı Mutfağı*)
- Happy Recipes with Ömür Akkor (*Ömür Akkor'la Mutlu Tarifler*)
- Recipes from Anatolia by Ömür Akkor (*Ömür Akkor'dan Anadolu Tarifleri*)
- Spring of Taste at Breakfast (*Kahvaltıda Lezzet Pınarı*)
- Tastes of Ramadan with Komili (*Komili ile Ramazan Lezzetleri*)
- Anatolian Recipes (*Anadolu Tarifleri*)
- Wildflower Tables (*Kır Çiçeği Sofraları*)
- Early Period Islamic Cuisine (*Erken Dönem İslam Mutfağı*)

#### **(Gourmand Cookbook Awards, Best World Cuisine in the World, 2015)**

- Komili Travel Book of Flavors I with Ömür Akkor

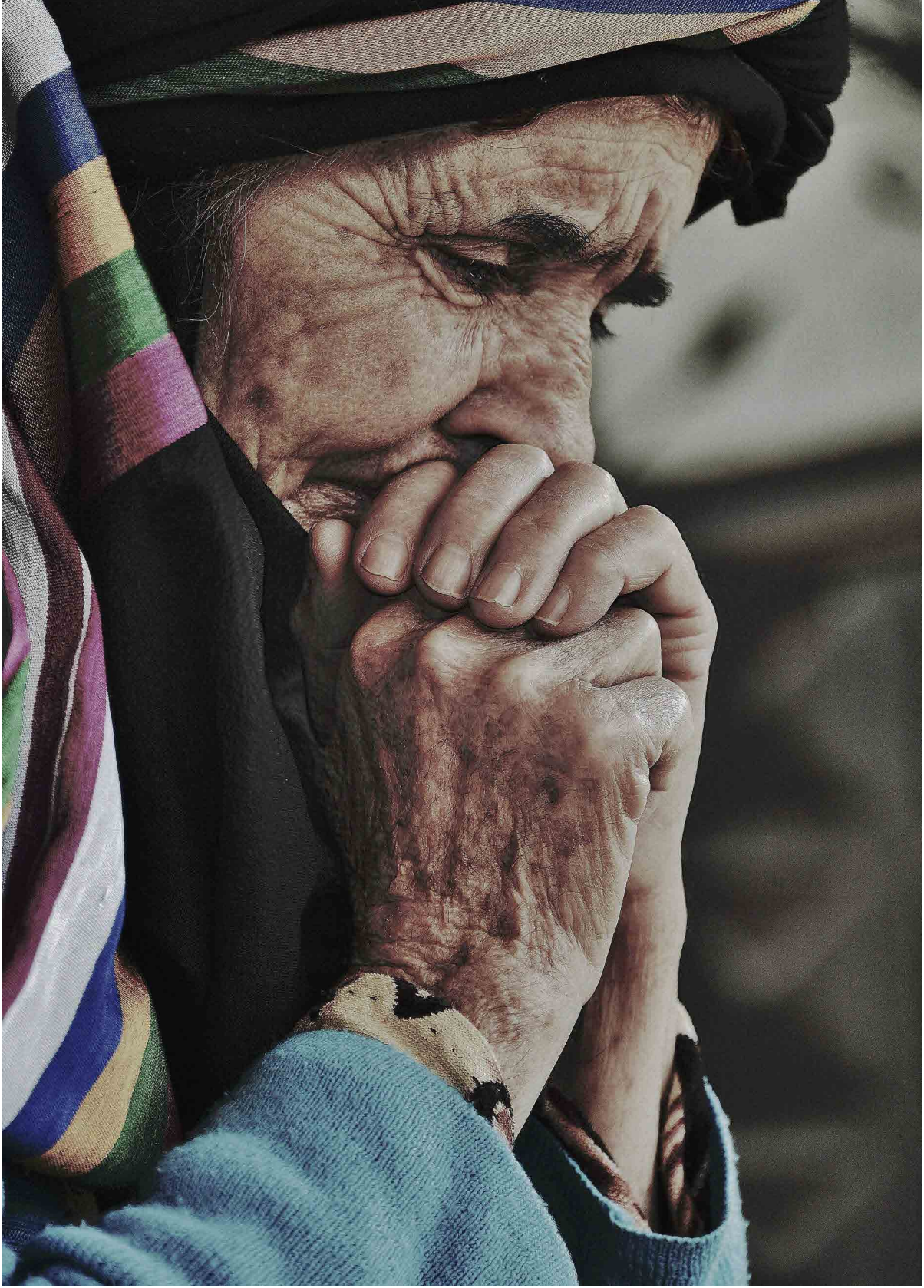
#### **(Gourmand Cookbook Awards, Best Culinary Travel Book in the World, 2016)**

- Komili Travel Book of Flavors II with Ömür Akkor









ZİHNİ GÜLER



## Preface

It was an unforgettable journey that I took in a small van equipped with nothing but my love for my country and a cell-phone so that I could use its camera.

My goal was to make as many people as I can to acknowledge that each square meter of this country is so precious while touching the lives of the people in the East, and listening to their stories.

When I set out for the journey, I was ready to settle for even one person.

At times, my eyes filled with tears because of the sudden play of a sad folk song on the radio, and at others, simply gazing at the mountains while standing on the earthen-plastered roof a village building.

The East was my happiness...

This trip to the East also got its special place among my memories as the most important experience of my life.

I believe that a person should not be spending his entire life by repeating the things he always does. (Well... Perhaps, he should... Who knows?) And he should not be satisfied with routines all the time. Because, for a person to be happy he should seek. Happiness is not something that stands right in front of you daily. Well, when this dawned on me, I had long started on the road, because to get this feeling, I needed the East, the furthest East. I'm writing these lines to you from there.



LEVENT ATEŞ

## Dedication

I listened to the story of the specialist sergeant, who spent five years of his life there.

I listened to the story of a soldier about how he stood guard without a blink of the eye at a base point—perhaps within a mere fifty square meters— without going anywhere for a whole year.

I listened to the story of the policeman, who locked his own house on the third month of his marriage, entrusting his wife back to her family, after being appointed for duty in the East.

I listened to the story of the teacher giving his all to his students so that they could learn a letter.

That day, I spent half of my time in the military bases, and gained the most important teachings of my life. May God protect our homeland, our soldiers, our police force, our teachers, and our officers.

May God be pleased with them forever!

**August 29, 2018**

**Çukurca**









MELEK KAYA

## Acknowledgement

I now notice that it has been twenty years since the first trip.

I still continue to travel around Anatolia with the same enthusiasm, and I still write with the same enthusiasm.

At the times when I could take one day off from work once a week, I would head for the bus station after work, and I would buy a ticket to just anywhere. Then, I would sleep on the bus; and spend my day off visiting the restaurants, bakeries, and farmers' markets in the destination I had reached, and reading and taking notes. At a point when I could no longer walk because of tiredness, I would go back to the bus station, get a ticket, sleep on the bus all night all the way back, and get back to work in the morning.

For years, I slept in buses so that I could save on the hotel cost.  
Neither have I lost my enthusiasm nor have I lost my passion.

I would so much like to thank the Komili Olive Oil family, who has deemed my efforts during all these travels, what I have written, and my passionate love for Anatolia as precious; and who has been an unconditional support since the very first book.





## The Veteran Trees

I am the earliest owner of Anatolia.

I was here centuries before you were just as I  
still will be centuries after you.

I was here when the Turks were entering Anatolia,  
during the conquering of Istanbul, and also when  
the horses were being juttet down into the  
Mediterranean like a mare's head.<sup>3</sup>

I came turning green through every snowfall, and every thunderstorm.  
What remained after each war were my fresh branches.

The birds flying over me...

My leaves that are providing shade to a kid...

The lovers who were seated down on my skirts...

All that remains from all is just me.

I am the earliest living creature of Anatolia  
that is still alive,

I am the oldest, the most silent owner of this land.

I am the olive tree that gets renewed at every turn  
of the season

And who will still continue living after you are gone...

I am the relish for bread

I am the journey to eternity with my water flowing in the stone mill.

I am the olive tree

The earliest owner of Anatolia.

Who could have guessed that I would depart for this journey standing by these trees, which are thousands of years old... Who could have guessed that these olive trees would be seeing me off from one end of this fertile land to reach to the other end... I set off quietly on a summer morning leaving them behind.

For those of you, who do not know the beginning of the story, I would like to mention again. My grandfather *Uzun Efendi*<sup>4</sup> used to grow his olives in the abundant soil of Kilis—at a distance about 1500 kilometers from these trees—and he would extract the oil from the olives in his stone mill when the season was right. Perhaps that is why I was double excited with the facts that my road had intersected with that of the Komili's; and that I was about to set off towards the olive oil hometowns of Anatolia; Adıyaman, Kilis, Nizip and Derik, starting off by these thousands of years old trees.

<sup>3</sup> "...jutting down into the Mediterranean like a mare's head..." is a line from the poem "Invitation" by Nazim Hikmet Ran

<sup>4</sup> "Uzun" means "Tall". "Efendi" was a title showing respect in the older days. It somewhat translates into Master Tall or Mr. Tall.





# Komili Travel Book of Flavors III with Ömür Akkor

## Introduction

In this third volume of the Komili Travel Book of Flavors, you will find my impressions from the Eastern journey that I set off for on August 2018 out of Ayvalık, and which lasted for five consecutive weeks.

However, although the name suggests a trip through the Eastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, I have added in a few other points, which were to the East from where I started, next to the cities and smaller districts of the Southeastern Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia regions. I will be referring to all these cities collectively as my Eastern journey, or the trip to the East.

That is exactly why particularly Kahramanmaraş aka Maraş, which happens to be in the Mediterranean Region, was the first destination; and thus, the starting point of this trip.

Later on, I went down towards the border; first to Kilis; then, on to Urfa, Mardin, Şırnak, and Hakkâri. Naturally, in between, I steered to the North trying to include Diyarbakır, Batman and Siirt into my route. In the meantime, I need to mention a fact: Although Kilis is mentioned as part of the Southeastern Anatolian Region in the weather forecasts, its city center is actually considered to be within the boundaries of the Mediterranean Region. Having given this interesting piece of information, I also have to add this: some of the cities of the East or their smaller districts that you cannot see as part of this book, were covered in the previous two volumes of this series of Book of Travels.

That is all for now! If you are ready, let's start our journey altogether!

**M. Ömür Akkor**

**March, 2019**





My Dear Hometown

# KİLİS

---

*The house I was born in  
Right above the ground level, with an iron frame...  
Where my story began.  
My hometown.  
The border of Azez, where I grew up,  
The Spring of Afrin, where I swam,  
Merdanlı, my village.  
The cloistered streets of Kilis...  
My grandfather's strong dark tea,  
My grandmother's meals,  
The magical house of my hacı<sup>5</sup> aunt...  
My elementary school garden, where I used to run.  
The smell of bread from the bakery,  
The "urmu mulberry<sup>6</sup>" I used to eat right off its branch,  
The "hönüsü grape<sup>7</sup>".  
My hometown!  
Although I don't visit it that often, it is the place I feel  
in my heart all the time.*

---

Now I come to understand how difficult it is for someone to tell about—let alone give praises for—a place he comes from. It seems like I have not written even one line about Kilis all these years. Right now, even when I am writing these lines, I am having difficulty.

<sup>5</sup> "Hacı" is a title and prefix that is awarded to a person who has successfully completed the Hac or Hadj or Hajj duty for a Muslim; pilgrimage to Mecca.

<sup>6</sup> "Urmu" mulberry is a black mulberry kind specific to the region. The word is *urmu* in local dialect.

<sup>7</sup> "Hönüsü" grape is a variety largely grown in Southeastern Anatolian Region. It has large berries, thin skin, and an aromatic flavor.



Kilis... The qualities of my homeland such as its air, the water, and the soil seem to be really different to me. Doesn't everyone feel the same about his homeland? Its people, its dinner tables, its smoke flavored bread cooked in the oven where olive *pirs*<sup>8</sup> are placed, its season for making grape molasses, its olives that we pick in the crisp cold of the month of November, the bitter olive oil that we extract in the stone mill of my grandpa, the figs and the mulberries in its gardens, and the grapes on its vines... All so different...

Our gatherings under the grape vine tree in the *havus*<sup>9</sup> of our home, the meals being prepared and the verjuice being pressed in the *havus*, the collective palm-rolling of meat or *bulgur*<sup>10</sup> balls, the way my grandpa used to sit in his chair...

There! It seems like when one starts to write about his homeland, he remembers many things. It is neither possible to forget its dishes nor its breezes cooling the summer evenings...

So, let's go around in my hometown now, if you wish.

The term "The Paris of the East" is commonly used for some cities in Turkey. Kilis is one of them. They say that people used to come for its old shopping arcades all the way from Istanbul. Fabrics in all shapes and colors, a wide array of fragrances, porcelain pieces, copper items... All unique, all with the best quality... But of course, I am only referring to the '70s and '80s; only those times I can remember.

However, nowadays, it is a border city, where seventy-thousand Kilis habitants are living together with one hundred and fifty-thousand Syrian migrants; and where a different sound is being heard instead of its older unique dialect. Nevertheless, she still lives in its own culture, and tries to protect and own it without giving up its dignified stance despite all the negativities.

### **Life in the Border**

Before starting to tell about Kilis, we drive to the border gate so that we can decipher its current conditions. Kilis is hosting thousands of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, who live in camps, who go to whatever work they find daily, and who walk back to the camps—their homes—in the evenings.

It is truly a very difficult situation for everyone.

As I was gazing through the entrance of the camp I visited near the Öncüpınar border gate, this is exactly what I thought: "Who could have imagined such a life?"

*"Your homeland is behind  
the barbed wire. The whirls  
of the scent of your city  
that you inhale in longing  
are carried to you with the  
evening breeze. But, you can  
neither go nor come.*

*Your family; maybe your  
kids, or your parents, or  
your relatives are under the  
soil. A never-ending internal  
hurt...  
And perhaps, not being able  
to return to those lands ever  
again...*

*You cannot even imagine the  
stories out there! Stories so  
harrowing, so lost, so black.*

*May God protect all from  
becoming stateless!"*

<sup>8</sup> "*Pir*" is a local word used for a dried-up olive branch and its dried leaves

<sup>9</sup> "*Havus*" is a local word used for the courtyard of a house

<sup>10</sup> "*Bulgur*" is a form of wheat that has been parboiled, cracked, and dried. It is a very common staple food item in Turkey.





In any case, in the light of all this agenda, we arrive at Kilis Cumhuriyet Meydanı (The Republic Square). This is the official area designated for celebration of all festivals. It is also the center of the Kilis Marketplace. We will be parking the van somewhere around here, and we will cover the entire city walking. This is perhaps the best thing about Kilis; everything is so within reach, every place is so nearby.

### İzzet Usta<sup>11</sup>, the Butcher

Without a doubt, the first stop has to be İzzet Usta, the butcher. Mention Kilis, and one immediately thinks of tava<sup>12</sup>. And mention *tava*, one immediately thinks of İzzet Usta, the butcher. Using a mincing-knife he minces pieces of lamb meat mixed with fresh red and green peppers, garlic and onions. After putting them in a cooking tray and spreading them evenly, he sends the tray to the Emniyet Pide Fırını<sup>13</sup> (Emniyet Pide Bakery) next door for cooking. And you, in the meantime, start waiting impatiently. In about fifteen minutes, the tava arrives at your table. But wait! Use of cutlery is not allowed! You start eating using your hands and the Kilis-specific *tırnak pide*<sup>14</sup> to mop up the plate.

Welcome to Kilis! :)

### Hilfan Usta, the Sheep-head Cook

A real expert on cooking sheep's head and feet... His use of techniques, the quality of the supplies he uses, his know-how and his ethics as a tradesman seriously stand out. As a family, they have been preparing nothing but sheep's head and feet for three generations, and they highly deserve the respect they get.

The heads that are cooked in the *tandır*<sup>15</sup> at night, are de-boned upon getting an order. But at that moment when it is about to be served, they pound fresh green garlic and fresh hot chili peppers in the mortar, and add one spoonful or more of this mixture based on the customer's liking. I highly recommend it; it makes it extremely tasty... Besides the head, boiled and sliced tongue, brain with eggs sautéed in butter-ghee, and feet are real masterpieces for offal lovers.

### Historic Mercimekler Bakery

Famous for its delicious *kahkes*<sup>16</sup> and various delicious smells spreading out, this seventy year old historic bakery is way above the standards of both tastes and techniques. Their *kahkes* are prepared using whey and olive oil. When you are here, you understand you are in Kilis, and you taste Kilis. The sweet smell of the *kahkes* cooked in the stone-oven inundates the entire neighborhood. If you go to the front of the Kadı Mosque near Cumhuriyet Meydanı (The Republic Square), you can easily find the bakery following the smells. I say, the *kahkes*, the *peksimets*<sup>17</sup>, Aleppo-style cookies, and the goodies made with tahini are not to be missed while shopping for take-away to bring back home.

### Three Dessert Shops: Antepli Baklava, Bekanlar, Hacı Fadiloğulları

Kilis has been under the influence of its neighbors Aleppo and Gaziantep aka Antep mostly in the culinary field. This influence is perhaps most commonly observed in its desserts. The desserts, which carry similar names, reach at new levels of taste here. While the *katmer*<sup>18</sup> is cooked in the oven in Antep, it is prepared by frying in butter-ghee in Kilis; and also, it is served with the addition of powdered sugar and cinnamon on top. Although it is fried in butter-ghee, I find it to be lighter, and definitely more flavorful.

<sup>11</sup> “*Usta*” translates to “master” or “craftsman”. In Turkey, it is used for addressing a (usually male) person, indicating respect, and his level of mastery in his profession. It comes after the name of the person.

<sup>12</sup> “*Tava*” is a generic term for a certain style of cooking (in the context of the book, mostly in stone oven) and/or the cooking tray itself, used all over Turkey.

<sup>13</sup> “*Pide Fırını*” is a bakery dedicated to cooking *pide* or pita; usually round or oval-shaped flatbread.

<sup>14</sup> “*Tırnak pide*” translates to “finger pita”. It takes its name from the fingerprint-like shapes on it. It is a thick and chewy kind of pita bread specifically serving well as a dipper.

<sup>15</sup> “*Tandır*” a traditional clay wood-burning oven, either in or on the ground, or lately also built at a higher level. Sometimes it may specify the food item that is cooked indicating where it was cooked in. (tandır bread, tandır meat, etc...)

<sup>16</sup> “*Kahke*” is type of a cookie prepared with lots of spices. It is believed that it originates in Aleppo

<sup>17</sup> “*Peksimet*” is a type of cake-rusk.

<sup>18</sup> “*Katmer*” is a crispy phyllo dough dessert, which contains pistachios and clotted cream in it, in its most traditional recipe. However, regional variations do exist.







## *Licorice Sherbet<sup>22</sup>*

*The Licorice Sherbet sold everywhere in the market in Kilis has a staple place in the Kilis Cuisine. I highly recommend that you drink this at the first sherbet shop (or street seller) you come across with in the market. I believe that you cannot match the effect of coolness or the feeling of freshness it gives to you. Especially during the Ramadan, the sherbet, which is sold in one-liter bags, turns into the honored guest of all Ramadan dinner tables at homes.*

<sup>22</sup> “Şerbet” or “sherbet” is a traditional (and historic) sweet drink made with fruit juice and/or herbs and/or flower petals mixed with water that is sweetened with honey or sugar. It is usually (and best) served chilled. Some are believed to have healing powers due to the nutrients in them. The term “şerbet” or “sherbet” is also used for the syrup made with water and sugar (and sometimes with a touch of lemon juice as a flavoring agent), which is poured over desserts like baklava.

The so-called *Cennet Çamuru* (the Mud of Heaven) carries a 500-year-old story with it starting from Aleppo and traveling to Kilis. The dough of the thin strings used in making the *kadayıf*<sup>19</sup> are kneaded with milk instead of water as usually done elsewhere; and then, they are hand-cut and fried in butter-ghee. In the next step, some sherbet and pistachios are poured on, and it is set aside to rest. At the time of serving, once again as a derivation from the standard, it is served with two toppings: *sahan kaymağı*<sup>20</sup> and cinnamon.

In Kilis, it is pretty common to order some dessert for delivery at home. If there are guests at home over dinner, the host calls a dessert shop to order some *künefe*<sup>21</sup>, or Mud of Heaven. They are both consumed with great appetite, fresh out of the oven and warm.

## **Şekeroğlu Spices**

Although it is not so commonly acknowledged, the cuisine of Kilis is among the most delicious and rich regional cuisines of our country. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the most traditional techniques are still kept alive. Slow-cooking and rituals of preparations that usually start days in advance are still the norm in Kilis. One does not buy rice-flour from the market; it is prepared! The rice is soaked in water, drained, and then laid under the sun to dry. In the next step, it is pounded in the mortar, sifted; and thus, turned into rice-flour; all ready to be used when the actual cooking follows later. Many other examples such as this are still observed in the traditional Kilis cuisine. The second reason for the Kilis cuisine to be among the most delicious cuisines is the quality of supplies used in cooking. All spices used in cooking in Kilis are purchased as grains, and the grinding is made at home. Pomegranate molasses (mind you; I am not saying pomegranate syrup or sour), red pepper paste, and dried vegetables are still made with traditional methods. And the supplies sold in the markets are made in this way, too.

Make sure to leave Kilis having bought your kitchen food supplies. You will immediately notice the change in the taste of your dishes. You can do this shopping from the Şekeroğlu Family, who has top-notch expertise in this field in Kilis.

<sup>19</sup> “*Kadayıf*” is a dessert made with two layers of finely shredded dough clusters (somewhat like noodles) with pistachio filling between the layers, all soaked in sweet syrup, and served at room temperature.

<sup>20</sup> “*Kaymak*” is Turkish style clotted cream of milk. “*sahan kaymağı*” is a special kind of regional Turkish clotted cream of milk prepared in a cooking tray. It is not as common as regular *kaymak*. They are both denser in consistency in comparison to the regular clotted cream of milk used in USA or Europe; so thick that they can be made into a roll.

<sup>21</sup> “*Künefe*” is a dessert made with two layers of finely shredded dough clusters (somewhat like noodles) with cheese filling between the layers, all soaked in sweet syrup, and served warm.



## Olive Oil

*It is zeyt<sup>23</sup> for us.*

*It is zeyt for my grandma, too.*

*And it is still zeyt for any  
of the inhabitants of Kilis.*

Although hardly anyone ever knows, olives and olive oil are important sources of income for Kilis. And, the olive groves encircling Kilis are the decorations of the land of Kilis. To consume olive oil is a wide-spread culture in Kilis. A breakfast in Kilis would not start without dipping the bread first into olive oil, and then into *zahter*<sup>24</sup>. Eggs fried in olive oil is another favorite dish; especially if the oil is used abundantly so that one can enjoy mopping the pan using bread. Frying in olive oil is a sine-qua-none for lunch time. Frying cannot be done in any other type of oil around here anyway.

My grandma Zennup Hanım<sup>25</sup> is one of those housewives, who uses olive oil most expertly. As she gets ready for turning a simple plain *bulgur pilavı* into a feast, she calls out “Pass the *zeyt* to me” , and she warms up the olive oil in the copper pan. She pours it on to the *pilav*<sup>26</sup>, and puts the lid on for it to rest. You just simply cannot believe the taste! If she is to add mint into the soups she prepares, she always prepares the mint mixing with olive oil so that it gets an emerald color. If the oil is slightly on the bitter side, Zennup Hanım puts the oil in a pan to heat on the kitchen stove, but she also lets a slice of bread fry in it. Only then the oil gets ready to be used in cooking. That is the way it is... An inhabitant of Kilis never refrains from giving her love and gratitude to her city, its trees, or its fruits. Kilis is always given the red-carpet treatment.

<sup>23</sup> The word for olive is “*zeytin*” in Turkish. Here, the word is shortened for “*zeyt*”; almost like shortening olive for oli. In this context, it is used for olive oil.

<sup>24</sup> “*Zahter*” is a culinary herb. It is also the name of a spice mixture typically used as a condiment, which contains the herb along with toasted sesame seeds, dried sumac, and often salt, as well as other spices like cumin and coriander, and herbs like oregano, marjoram or thyme.

<sup>25</sup> “*Hanım*” is a word for addressing a female person, indicating respect. It is similar to Lady/Mrs./Ms., but in Turkish it comes after the name of the person.

<sup>26</sup> “*Pilav*” refers to a dish of grains (often rice or bulgur in Turkey) stewed preferably in a broth, but many times in just plain water. Optionally, it can be seasoned with meat, vegetables, herbs and spices.







As I said at the beginning, Kilis is a modest place with a culture and dialect specific to itself. Here! A Kilis poem that my father wrote in his youth using that dialect;

#### MY BEAUTIFUL KİLİS<sup>27</sup>

Ale âle, dost dost evlendi oğlan.  
Sözü haneği hep, tatlı Kilis'im.  
Döymede, miderde, şeyle bir fırlan,  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Ortaya bir tiro bıraktı Şaho  
Tutturdu gidor, kez, onunda Maho,  
Döyordu oğlanı dün gene Küfo.  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Süyüğe, süllümü kurutup da asmış,  
Alleklik ettiği bir sahen aş'mış,  
Seydo'nun işleri, başından aşmış,  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Su durmaz kadüsün dibinde, kırık  
Bekmez yere akor, katremiz yarık  
Matrak konun başında sarık.  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Dehlizin ağzında belleâ damış.  
Ayyüş'e atılan, kocaman daşmış,  
Get eve otur kez maskara kesmiş.  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Teşti leğeni de havışa yığdık,  
Açılmadı kapı, mandalı kırdık.  
Kâhke bezine de karaltı sardık.  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Time'nin evinde dört cara zeyil.  
Nol'du da gelmedi bizim bu Seyit?  
Kelo giden katkı dün çifte meyit!  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Kilis'in üst yanı, bağlık, bahçalık,  
Kalmadı ayakta bak herif çarık.  
Hayirler olmamış, daha hep kerik  
Özü sözü tatlı, güzel Kilis'im.

Doğan Akkor

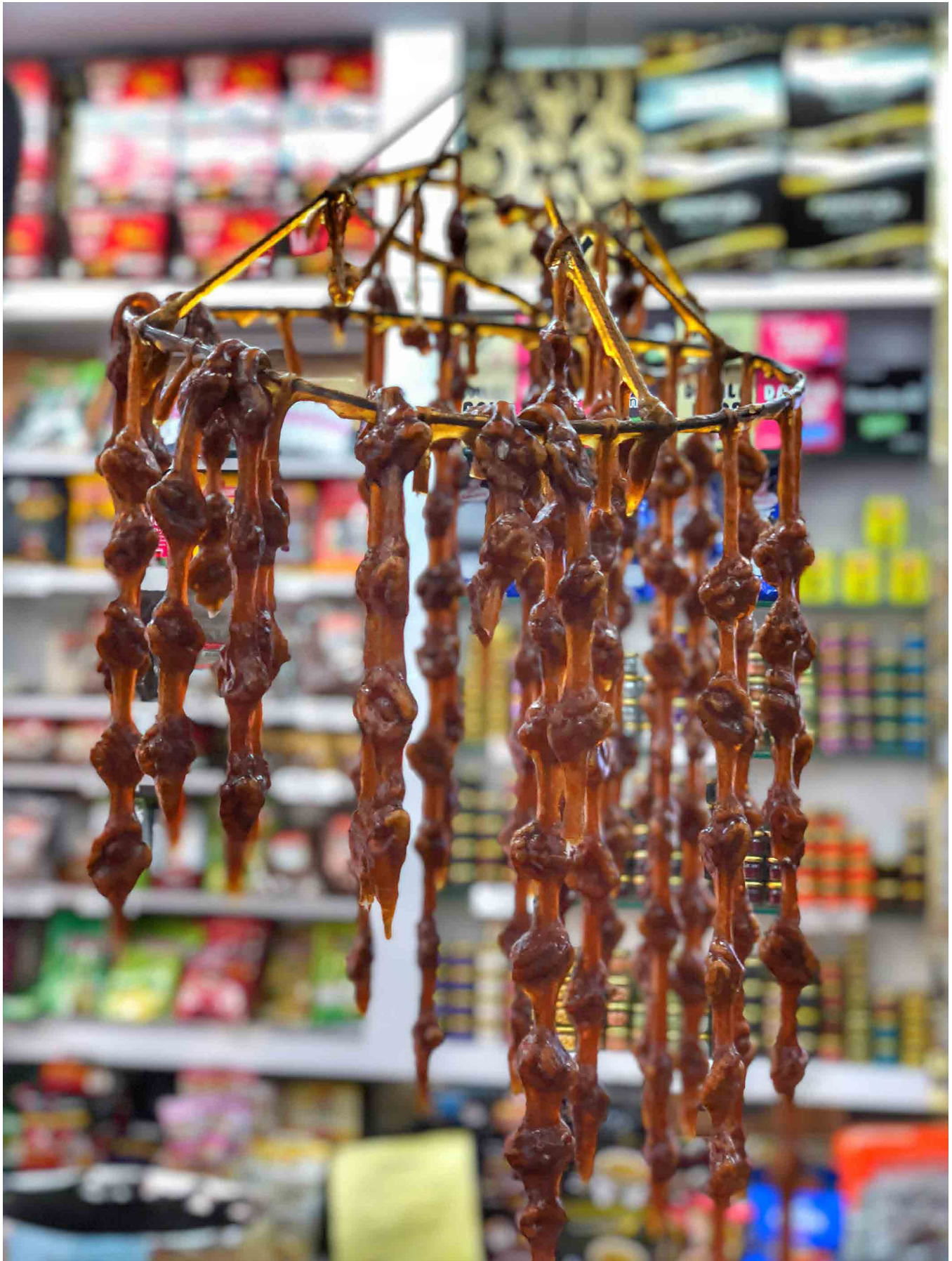
*When you visit Kilis, I suggest that you find my father, who still lives there, so that he can talk to you about the poem in detail. You will not only have a great meal together, but also learn about the culture of Kilis by means of this poem.*

<sup>27</sup> The poem's language is heavily laden with local words that are incomprehensible for anyone outside the locality, and the names of local personalities. It also reflects the phonetic pronunciation of the words in the local dialect. It is a rhyming ode to Kilis echoing Mr. Akkor's (the father) love for his city. It was the decision of the publisher and/or the author to leave the poem in Turkish.













## Kahke Cooked with Olive Oil

*1 cup Komili Early Harvest Olive Oil*

*1 cup hot milk*

*1 cup granulated sugar*

*2 tablespoons pounded mayana (anise)*

*1 tablespoon love mist seeds (black cumin)*

*Sufficient amount of flour*

- Combine the milk and sugar, and stir until the sugar is dissolved.

Add the rest of the ingredients except the flour, and mix well.

- Prepare the dough of the *kahke* by adding the flour into the mixture little by little.

- Tear off small pieces from the dough; about the size of walnuts. Make them into balls and then make holes in the middle, making them into a *simit* or doughnut shape.

- If you like, you can sprinkle sesame seeds on some.

- Place the *kahkes* on cooking paper, and then put the tray into the pre-heated oven set for 190 degrees Celcius. Bake for 20 minutes and serve.

While preparing the *kahkes*, which are consumed in abundance at tea time in Kilis, you can substitute the milk with cheese whey or yoghurt whey.











## MALATYA

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*The best part of this journey was going  
around in each part of the country  
accompanied by someone from that part.  
People think that I have covered a long  
distance all alone, but, in fact, in each city,  
I had at least one local person as my guide,  
and we went around together. Malatya is one  
of the places where I had been the luckiest  
on this matter, because I was going to be  
accompanied by my friend Chef Ali Açıkgül  
and the Karaca Family. I will not say,  
"I cannot even begin to tell how pleased I was,  
how well I was entertained, and all the things  
I ate!" Just the opposite; I will say, "Let me  
begin telling you with great joy!"*

---

I believe that Malatya has been shadowed by the fame of its apricots whereas it is one of the capitals of gastronomy in Turkey with all its vegetables, fruits, and dishes. Leave UNESCO aside. It is us who should first take these flavors, food supplies, and culture under protection. It has been a long time since I have been on such a tasty journey. I would like to specifically emphasize that.

Our first stop in Malatya was the city center and the coppersmiths' market. This place is a complete center of gastronomy not only because of the culinary items sold but also because of the flavors one finds in the surrounding restaurants.

I always repeat: "If a city has a coppersmiths' market, that city is beautiful." Just like Malatya... This market is one of the best places to get yourself acquainted with the localities, the uniqueness, the sounds, and the people of the city. The other tradesmen and their shops surrounding it, the whole-in-the-wall eateries, the bakeries, and sipping a glass of strong dark tea with the locals will please you exceedingly.

As I have mentioned already, there are seriously good restaurants around the market. Yet, I suggest checking out the tables around which the local merchants are gathered at lunch time. I cannot write enough to describe the variety. If you wish, let's now begin tasting the Malatya flavors.

### **Hacı Baba Öz Sinan Meat Restaurant**

I came to understand that I have spent my life so far without knowing that one of the best meat-specialty restaurants of Turkey is in Malatya. I pity what I have lost for not having come to Malatya earlier.

Frankly, I had not come across anywhere else in Turkey before coming to this restaurant where all of the meat-specialty dishes on the menu—each of which requires a different kind of expertise—were so good. The *Geleli kebab*, the *kaburga* (ribs), the *tandır kebab* and the *kâğıt* (paper) *kebab* were like lessons to be included in a school curriculum. And the *bulgur* and rice *pilavs*<sup>28</sup> were at such levels that they would please any pilav-lover like myself. I consider Hacı Baba Öz Sinan Meat Restaurant as one of the best meat-specialty restaurants of Turkey. I say; make the effort to visit Malatya so that you can eat here.

### **Acılı Ayran<sup>29</sup> - Chili-pepper spiced Yoghurt & Water Drink**

It is quite popular in Malatya. Although *ayran* is served ubiquitously throughout Turkey, I can easily say that I have not come across with this version in many other places. They chop chili peppers and purslane leaves finely. They add this mixture on to yoghurt and dilute it with water to make it into *ayran*. It gets ready for consumption after resting for three days. Both the taste of the yoghurt and the burning and refreshing effect of the spiciness of the pepper seems to have turned the *ayran* into a masterpiece. I suggest that you definitely try this when you are in Malatya.

### **Çağrı Döner**

Although, somehow, we consider *döner*<sup>30</sup> to be a street-food item belonging to the West, its origins are one-hundred percent in the East. Proof lies in the taste of the *döners* in Eastern Anatolia; I consider them to be second to none. Both the fleshiness and deliciousness of animals, and the mastery of the chefs, and the use of traditional techniques still point out to the East for the most savory *döners*. Çağrı Döner is one of the oldest, and the most traditional representatives of *döner* in Malatya.

<sup>28</sup> "*Pilav*" refers to a dish of grains (often rice or bulgur in Turkey) stewed preferably in a broth, but many times in just plain water. Optionally, it can be seasoned with meat, vegetables and spices.

<sup>29</sup> "*Ayran*" is a non-alcoholic drink made by diluting plain yoghurt with water and adding a little salt.

<sup>30</sup> "*Döner*" literally translates into "rotates", describing the way this meat-dish is cooked; on a vertical rotisserie. Seasoned meat stacked in the shape of an inverted cone is turned slowly on the rotisserie, next to a vertical cooking element. The outer layer is sliced into thin shavings as it cooks.





### Güngör Kebap

If you want to eat the tastiest ground meat kebab of Malatya, you need to go to Güngör Kebap inside the Coppersmiths' Market. I consider Malatya's variety of peppers as one of its outstanding elements. I would like to point out that I have eaten some of the ziest peppers of Turkey in here. I cannot take the mixed charcoaled pepper plate from this restaurant out of my mind. So, my suggestion for this restaurant is a wrap of ground meat kebab with peppers.

### Pepper Tava<sup>31</sup> with Tomatoes

Since I have arrived in Malatya I am in search of the *pepper tava with tomatoes* that I had tasted before. The recipe is pretty simple, but describing the taste is not such an easy task. We can briefly call it the masterpiece of simplicity. Sure enough, the reason behind such deliciousness got to be the local peppers, tomatoes, and definitely the butter. First, we melt the butter in a sheet metal pan. Then, we fry the Malatya peppers in them. A few minutes later, we add in the local tomatoes. The finishing touch is a pinch of salt. And that is all! But I cannot tell enough how delicious it is...

### Türk Kahvesi Bumbar<sup>32</sup> - Turkish Coffee, Stuffed Mutton Intestines

Weird enough, but *Türk Kahvesi Bumbar* is the name of the restaurant, and it translates into "Turkish Coffee - Stuffed Mutton Intestines". This is a small restaurant, where you can find the most delicious home-made dishes, especially the *sour cherry leaf wraps* and *bumbar*. *Sour cherry leaf wraps* is a masterpiece of the Malatya cuisine. The dough prepared mainly with *bulgur* is wrapped in sour cherry leaves, and then cooked. A sauce is prepared with yoghurt and butter that is cleared from its sediments. The wraps are put into the sauce. Finally, as a topping, previously crystallized onions are added before serving. It is impossible to forget the taste of this dish. I consider this dish as one of the most important regional meals of Turkey.

### Market Lahmacun<sup>33</sup>

Yes, Malatya's *market lahmacun* is pretty famous. Well, in fact, I am not sure if it is famous, at least outside of Malatya, because when we think of *lahmacun* in Turkey, we think of either Antep or Urfa. But, when I tasted it in Malatya, I understood that it was the locals of Malatya to be blamed. I concluded that they kept on eating these *lahmacuns* and refrained from telling the existence to anyone so that no one would know. Each bakery inside the market has its own version. Malatya-style *lahmacun* comes in a somewhat bigger than the standard size, and they have ample amount of ingredients on the topping. It goes so well especially with summer peppers. Best served with run-of-the-house *ayran*... A brief stop at a bakery while strolling the market is highly recommended!

### Nar Çiçeği Lokantası - Pomegranate Flower Restaurant

It is an important address among the night kitchens of Malatya. You can find whatever you are looking for here speaking of offal and soups. Their cheek, tongue, brain, *tuzlama*, *işkembe*<sup>34</sup> (tripe) and *paça* (feet), which they prepare with a sauce made mainly with yoghurt and vinegar, are quite high on demand.

<sup>31</sup> "*Tava*" is the name of a kitchen utensil: large, flat, concave or convex disc-shaped pan made from metal, usually sheet iron, cast iron, sheet steel or aluminium. However, in many regions in Turkey, it is used as the generic name for certain type of cooking, and as the name of the dish itself.

<sup>32</sup> "*Bumbar*" (aka Mumbar) is a type of sausage that is made with mutton, rice, black pepper, salt and cinnamon stuffed into an intestine casing. After the sausage is cooked by boiling and allowed to cool, it is sliced and fried in butter. Sometimes it is dipped in an egg batter before being fried.

<sup>33</sup> "*Lahmacun*" is most of the time a round (and sometimes oval-shaped), thin piece of dough topped with ground meat, finely chopped onions, tomatoes, parsley, and spices such as chili pepper flakes or paprika. Most of the time, it is baked in wood-burning ovens. It is served very commonly all around Turkey as a snack, a starter to a main course, or sometimes as a whole meal by itself. Some will refer to it as "Turkish Pizza", but the dough is way thinner than that of a pizza, and the topping does not have the variety of pizzas.

<sup>34</sup> "*İşkembe*" (tripe) soup consists of the cleaned, boiled stomach of a lamb or calf that is thickened with flour, egg yolk, yoghurt, and lemon juice. It is a relatively mild soup, and many customize it with condiments such as garlic, vinegar, pickles or piquant red pepper. "*tuzlama*" is a version of the *işkembe* soup featuring larger chunks of tripe.







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# ARAPGİR POSTASI

64.  
Yıl

Haftalık Siyasi Müstakil Gazete

Kurucusu Nevzat SEZER - A. Vahap AYDINLAR

Sahibi : R. Kamuran SEZER

Kuruluş Tarihi : 1 Haziran 1954

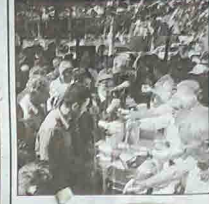
*Türkiye'nin çeşitli illerinden gelen akademisyenlerden Arapgir'e ziyaret*

## Bunlar birer turizm elçisi

...kongre için gelen KBB  
...program kapsamında  
...alı bir gezi yaptı.  
...üzelliklerini gezen  
...e hayran kaldı.  
...illerinden  
...ilce-



Dr. Erol Selim  
...nizasyonu  
...itli iller



Aşur



### Domates fiyatları el yakıyor

Bu yıl domates fiyat-  
nın yüksek olması  
ticileri etkiliyor. Genel-  
bu mevsimlerde küçük  
çannı da düşünerek  
dondurucularda sak-  
isteyen vatandaşlar,  
nn yüksek olmasın-  
dolayı bu düşünce-  
en vazgeçiyor.  
Devamı 8. sayfada

### MU, MI?

### Tarım Bakanlığı'nın 'Sağlıklı Beslenme' masası' yapıldı

2018 yılının 2. olağan  
is toplantısı 21-22, 3  
il 2018 tarihleri arasın-  
da Şanlıurfa Belediyesi'nin  
ev sahipliğinde gerçek-  
leştirildi. Toplantıya  
Arapgir'den ÇEKÜL Vakfı  
Temsilcisi Tuncay Çoğdaş  
katıldı. Devamı 6. sayfada

### ÇİMDİK

### EKSİĞİMİZ VAR

Geçen hafta sonu 50 kişilik bir tur  
organizasyonunda Arapgir'deki oteller  
yetersiz kaldı. Konuklar Millet Han,  
Nazar Otel ve Öğretmenevi'ne yerleştiril-  
di, ama bu grup dışında gelenler konakla-  
ma sorunu yaşadı.  
Demek ki, henüz turizm konusunda alt  
yapımızda eksikler var!

SEZER

### 5 genç çiftçiye daha büyükbaş hayvan verildi

Tarım ve Orman Bakan-  
lığı'na yürütülen Kırsal Kal-  
ınma Destekleri kapsamın-  
Projesi'nin Desteklenmesi  
Programı'ndan ilçemizde 5  
genç çiftçi daha yararlandı.  
Devamı 6. sayfada





# ARAPGİR, DARENDE

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*Arapgir has been long in my bucket list. I had been seriously curious about this place as a geographical location, but also, I was longing to taste the Arapgir dishes in their original location since I had been savoring them because of my friend Chef Ali Açıkgül.*

*Well, during this trip, it is exactly what I came to do; I met Chef Ali Açıkgül in Arapgir, and we started strolling around Arapgir together.*

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## **Köhnü Grape**

About forty different kinds of grapes are cultivated in Arapgir. The legendary Köhnü grape variety's fame has passed beyond the borders of Turkey reaching international acclaim. Its savory aroma is one-of-a-kind. Its color and bloom on the skin of its berries are as attractive as its taste. Köhnü grapes, which are equally flavorful both as fresh—especially when you pick it right from the vine— and dried, is among the precious treasures of our country. Those people whose hometown is Arapgir, but who no longer live in Arapgir, always long for this grape, and ask their friends in Arapgir to send some. The Köhnü grape, which you can savor in its fullest flavor by the end of August, is a sufficient enough reason all by itself to visit Malatya.

### Arapgir Basil

The best basil in the world! As simple as that! It is protected under the auspices of the Arapgir Municipality. Arapgir is a designated geographical indication. The municipality places so much importance that they even had products such as dried basil, basil tea, and basil jam made. Turkey has an enormously wide range of plant varieties—some being indigenous—but the Arapgir basil is the first and only produce with a geographical indication. You can consume the Arapgir basil added in *bulgur pilav*, or in a simple shepherd's salad, or as a topping on a bowl of warm soup. You are not going to be able to get over the aroma!

Arapgir Goat *Tandır*,

*İsot*<sup>35</sup> kebab,

Yoghurt made with sheep's milk,

*Tırnak pide*<sup>36</sup>,

Arapgir purple basil

and Köhnü grape next to all...

I believe the most important feature of *tandır* in Arapgir is its presentation. Almost all the precious elements of Arapgir has come together on this tray. You can find all these beauties in one place once you are inside the *Arapgir Kebab Salonu*. And furthermore, you can taste local meals that come out from time to time.

### Millet Han Konukevi - Millet Han Guest House

Millet Han, which has been restored and put to service by the Arapgir Municipality, provides the possibilities for both accommodations, and tasting local dishes.

*Arapgir sarması* aka *dolama*<sup>37</sup>

Fries

Wedding dish; a bulky piece of fried meat is cooked in water with lots of tomato paste.

*Akıtmacı bıcığı*<sup>38</sup>; small *akıtmacı* (pancakes) cooked on a convex sheet metal pan are covered with a sauce made with pounded garlic, milk and melted butter.

### Arapgir Textile Industry

During the Ottoman periods, the mention of Arapgir would bring textiles to one's mind before anything else. The woven fabric was called *manusa* back then. There were two kinds of *manusa*: solid colors and patterned ones. These fabrics were made with special hand-dyed threads. The sacks with an Arapgir stamp on them would be sought after and accepted unconditionally around the world. However, there is no trace of these fabrics anymore. Seems like they have been defeated by technology.

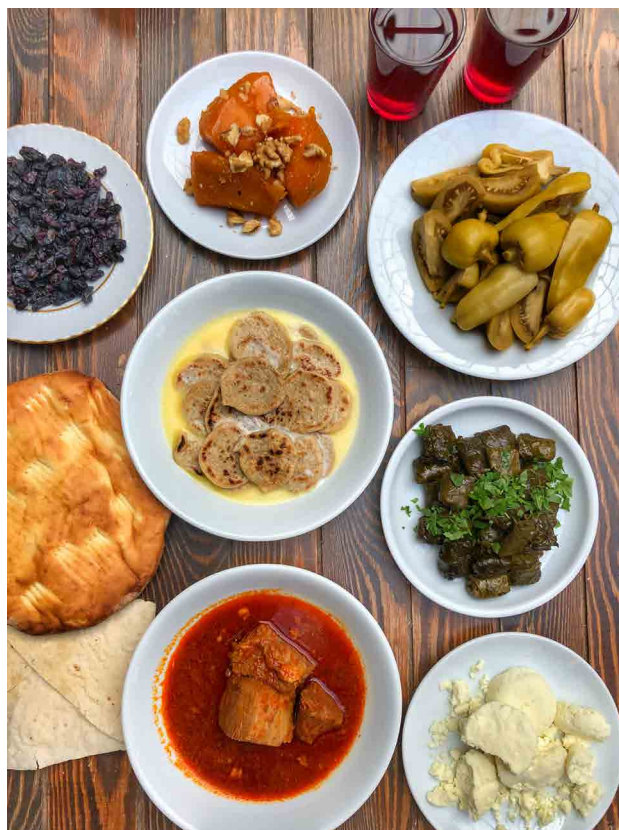
<sup>35</sup> “*İsot*” is a fresh or dried Turkish chili pepper, many times used in its flaked version as a spice. It is often described as having a smoky, raisin-like taste. It is technically a red pepper, ripening to a dark maroon on the plant.

<sup>36</sup> “*Tırnak pide*” translates to “finger pita”. It takes its name from the fingerprint-like shapes on it. It is a thick and chewy kind of pita bread specifically serving well as a dipper.

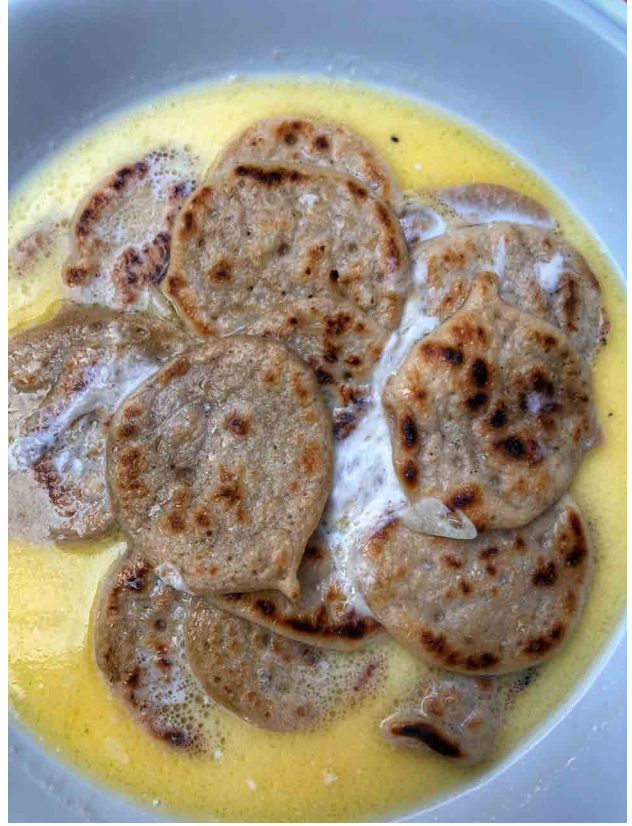
<sup>37</sup> “*Arapgir sarması* aka *dolama*” is similar to wrapped vine leaves with meat (*yaprak sarma*). The main differences from the standard vine leaves wraps (*yaprak sarma*) are the size of the wraps (much smaller in the Arapgir dish), the use of bulgur instead of rice, the way the meat is minced (with a mincing knife rather than a grinding machine) and last but not least the use of tail fat.

<sup>38</sup> “*Akıtmacı bıcığı*” resembles pancakes. The word *akıtmacı* translates to “something that is poured” (just like a pancake batter is poured).



















### **Asım Külâh Collection**

I was introduced to Asım Bey<sup>39</sup> in Arapgir. He is an unparalleled patriot, and a collector with great love for his country. He told me that he dedicated all his time to collecting documents, fabrics, kitchen utensils, and anything abstract or concrete that is relevant to the culture of Arapgir. His collection is unmatched. I can easily say that I have not come across with another person in Turkey, who is so aware of the preciousness of the land where he is born or the culture in that land. In the meantime, I can also easily express that I have never met anyone, who loves his hometown as much as a local person from Arapgir. They are the proudest people ever! If everyone loved and protected his hometown so much, our country would be spick and span. May the people of Arapgir live long!

During this trip to Malatya I discovered that Malatya is an extremely impressive place, and a remarkably good destination of gastronomy and excursions, not only at its urban center, but also with the surrounding districts in the countryside. I highly recommend you to spend at least three days in and around Malatya during any of your vacations.

### **DARENDE**

Darende got its well-deserved spot in the Book of Travels as one of the most beautiful Anatolian cities I have seen. I am dead sure I will be back to this city. Its unmatched nature and Somuncu Baba (Loafmaker Father) has a lot to do with this feeling. I found the complex and the picnic area by the Tohma River to be one of the most beautiful places in Turkey. Its clean surroundings, manicured flowers, huge trees, and the harmony of it all with the surrounding nature is unbelievably impressive.

### **Somuncu Baba**

Yıldırım (Thunderbolt) Beyazıt commissions the building of Bursa Ulu Cami (Bursa Grand Mosque) as a sign of gratitude for winning the Battle of Nicopolis. When the construction gets completed, and the day of inauguration arrives, he calls in Emir Sultan Hazretleri<sup>40</sup>, who was one of the revered elders in the Sufism circles of those times, to recite the first sermon.

Emir Sultan Hazretleri replies ;

“My Sultan, in this city, there are individuals, who have more wisdom than I. As long as they are among us, it would not be apt for me to recite any sermons.”, and he indicates to Sheik Hamid-i Veli Hazretleri; in other words, Somuncu Baba. Having presence before the Sultan, Somuncu Baba does not reject the duty. Once he renders the Surah al-Fatiha in seven different ways, the public becomes aware of his spiritual greatness, too. Somuncu Baba is one of the sages that has been fermented into Anatolia while being fed by the Khorasan spirituality. Since he died in Darende, the complex is here.

<sup>39</sup> “Bey” is a word for addressing a male person, indicating respect. It is similar to Sir/Mr., but in Turkish it comes after the name of the person.

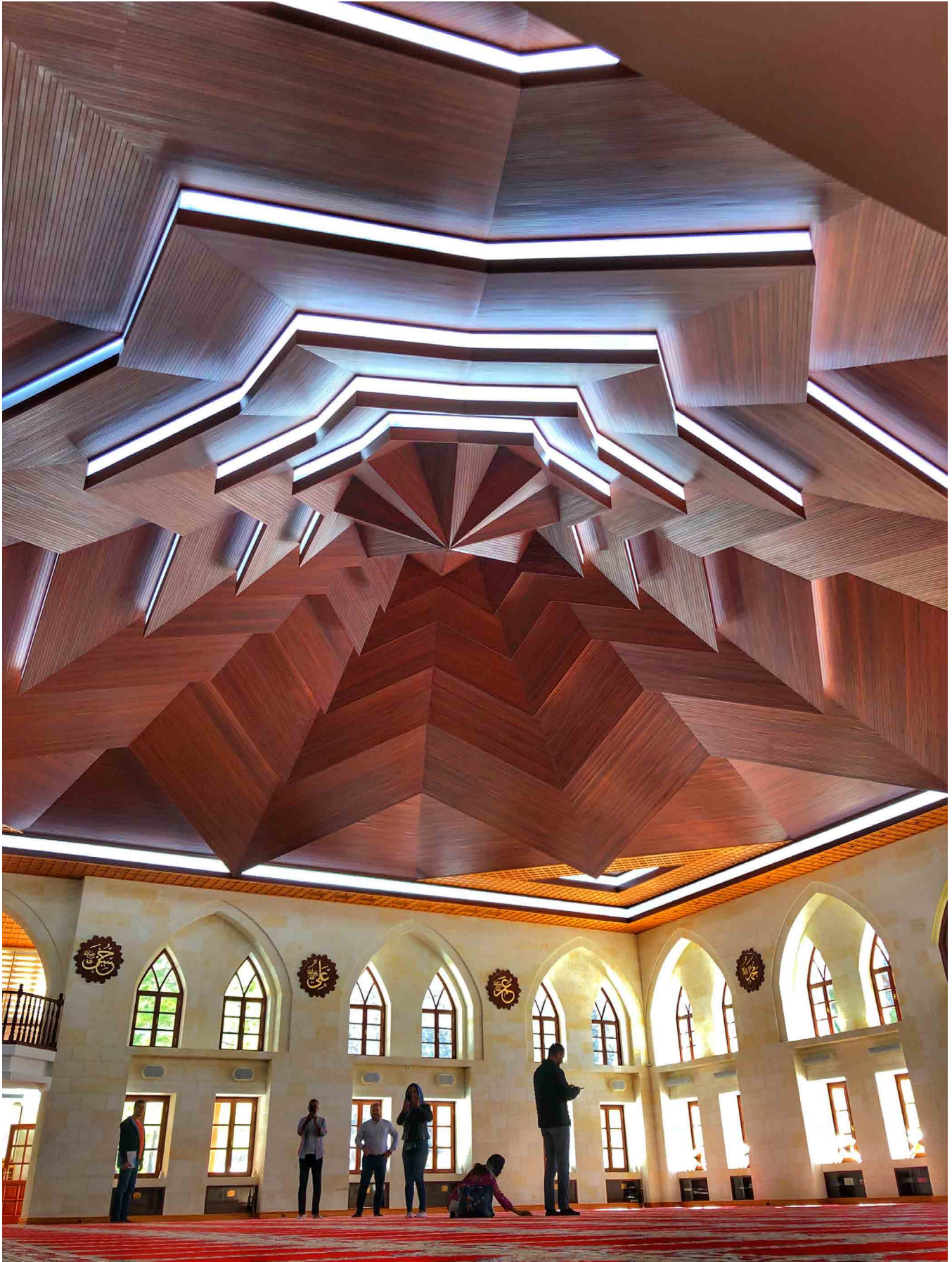
<sup>40</sup> “Hazret or Hazretleri” is an honorific title used to honor a person. It literally translates to “presence, appearance”. Initially, it was used for the prophets accepted by the Islamic faith. It carries denotations of charisma, and is comparable to traditional Western honorifics addressing high officials, such as “Your Honor”, “His/Her Majesty”, or “His Holiness”. This word may sometimes also appear after the names of respected Muslim personalities, which is the case in here.



### **Somuncu Baba Complex**

This complex is one of the most simple, yet beautiful examples of the Turkish Islamic architecture. It houses the Somuncu Baba Tomb, the Somuncu Baba Mosque and the Fish Pond in its peaceful grounds. The construction date of the tomb is unknown, but the mosque was built in 1686. The complex also houses a museum and a library. The ceiling of the new mosque on site is specifically awesome.

Since we spent the entire day in the complex and near the Tohma River while in Darende, we will be coming back in order to taste its meals.







MUSTAFA GEZER

The Zero Point of Turkey

## “ÇUKURCA”

---

*“No matter what I write, how long I write,  
which words I choose, how many hundreds  
of thousands of photos I shoot, or how many  
hours-long documentaries I prepare, I still  
cannot describe you that feeling!  
If you are not breathing its air, drinking its  
water, and sleeping its half-awake sleep,  
you can neither understand what it means to  
be there on a five-year duty nor healing the  
wounds and the happiness it gives you...”*

*No matter what I write, and how long I write,  
you cannot understand what it means to be  
there, and what it means to live there...”*

---

I had been to Hakkâri before, but this time, I was going to pass the border into Syria from Şırnak, and arrive into Çukurca on the border of Iraq. This was the planned route. I left Cizre, passed through Kasrik Mountain-Pass, and arrived in Şırnak. I stood right across from the imposing mountain when I arrived at the skirts of Mount Cudi. I was now ready to cross to the southernmost point of Turkey all by myself.



The scenery I was passing by, and the roads I was on were very impressive. The heat of summer was getting replaced by the coolness of the evening. It was gradually turning dark.

154 kilometers on the border of Syria and Northern Iraq

August 28, Saturday. 6:44 pm

I can never forget this moment.

I cannot possibly enumerate how many turns I made, and how many peaks I crossed over. It was like heading for beyond Mount Kaf<sup>41</sup>; it was endless. From each peak I arrived, I was able to see the next hills I would be crossing over, yet I was never getting there.

It was getting dark, and there was not a single soul on the road.

When I arrived in Çukurca, it was already dark. It was almost 9:00pm. The cool of the evening had already taken over the heat of summer. We were now sipping tea on a flat-roof on the border of Northern Iraq.

Neither the stories being told nor the tea we were sipping and the dried mulberries we were substituting for sugar in our tea were coming to an end. The cool night was getting older in all its quietness, and not even a leaf was stirring.

I had reached the furthest southeastern point I could have, and I was now on a flat-roof top. The stars were my blanket. I was about to fall asleep under the shadow of the mountains, and among the intermittent animal sounds reaching at my ears.

The sun rose and set on me early in the morning. I cannot explain how happy I woke up. It did not resemble any other place I had woken up before. I walked to the edge of the flat-roof feeling the cool scent of the morning, and gazed at the mountains across.

After eating some honey, some *kaymak* and home-made bread in the company of tea, we set off for the base points in the area.

<sup>41</sup> “*Mount Kaf*” is a legendary mountain that exists in fairytales and myths. Only heroes can reach there. It exists in utopia. Therefore, one can never reach there.



MEHMET CAN ALKAŞ











## **Life in Military Bases**

If you ask me what the greatest sacrifice I have seen in my life is, I would say, “That of the soldiers standing guard on our country, and that of their families.” To live with the fear of death that may knock on your door at any given moment... To spend each moment waiting for a piece of news... To startle at every ring of the phone...

That morning, we started visiting the military bases in the area on a special permission. There was a story of grief in every single corner we strolled through, and every military watch-post and base we visited.

Every road ended in anguish. There were thousands of curses on each mountain. And words got stuck in throats...

I listened to the story of a special-sergeant who spent five years of his life there.

I listened to the story of a soldier about how he stood guard without a blink of the eye at a base point—perhaps within a mere fifty square meters— without going anywhere for a whole year.

I listened to the story of the policeman, who locked his own house on the third month of his marriage, entrusting his wife back to her family, after being appointed for duty in the East.

I listened to the story of the teacher giving his all to his students so that they could learn a letter.

That day I spent half of my time in the military bases, and gained the most important teachings of my life.

May God protect our homeland, our soldiers, our police force, our teachers, and our officers.

May God be pleased with them forever!

“I will not forget the taste of this tea as long as I live.

The area forbidden for civilians, which I visited on special permission...

The brave soldier from Adana who prepared the tea...

The commander from Manisa with whom I puffed cigarettes...”





RUKEN SÖNMEZ



UĞUR BULUT



### Home of Mehdiye Hanım

My friend Kevser Hanım from *Mutfak Deneyleri* (Kitchen Experiments) went to Çukurca a few weeks before I did. When I saw the meals she ate there, which she shared in social media, I called her immediately, and inquired where she tasted them. She replied, “At Mehdiye Teyze’s<sup>42</sup>.” I asked back, “Will she cook for me, too?” In return, she said, “Don’t even mention! She would love to...” It would not be wrong to say I came all the way to eat Çukurca dishes directly from Mehdiye Teyze’s kitchen.

May she live long! Mehdiye Hanım opened up her home, and her kitchen, cooking several dishes in rivalry with each other.

The Kılıç family survives on farming. A true Çukurca family who has not left their land, their hometown. They appreciate the country, and the homeland. I cannot thank them enough for opening their door to me, and hosting me in their home.

How happy are the ones who love their country, their homelands...

### Dankut

A type of wheat *pilav* gets blended with onions and stir-fried peppers in a pot. First, some tomato paste, and then, some wheat is added in. They are stir-fried altogether. In the next step, some boiled chickpeas, and some water is added, and it is all cooked together. While the cooking is on its way, the water level is checked continuously; as the water evaporates, more water is added until everything is well-cooked. After allowing some time for the *dankut* to rest, some butter is heated, and poured over the *dankut*. It is set aside for another five minutes to rest further. If you consider that all the ingredients of the meal are grown or produced in here; and additionally, if you imagine the heated ayran butter made fresh in the morning, you can guess how delicious it was.

### Maş Pilavı - Mung Pilav

Mung beans is one of the most savory legumes of the East. They make soups, salads, stuffings, and numerous other dishes with it. In Çukurca they bring the mung beans together with Çukurca rice to create a delicious *pilav*.

### Tırşık

This is somewhat like a *köfte*<sup>43</sup> within another *köfte*, or *içli köfte*<sup>44</sup>... Balls are prepared using broken-grain rice, bulgur and ground meat from a yearling goat, and these are stuffed with a mixture made with onions and ground meat. The balls are cooked in water that is loaded with white onions from Hakkâri, and Çukurca sumac, which had been resting soaked in water.

<sup>42</sup> “Teyze” translates into “aunt”. In Turkey, it is used for addressing a female person you do not necessarily know or you are related to, indicating respect. It comes after the name of the person. It does not necessarily mean that the person is your real aunt.

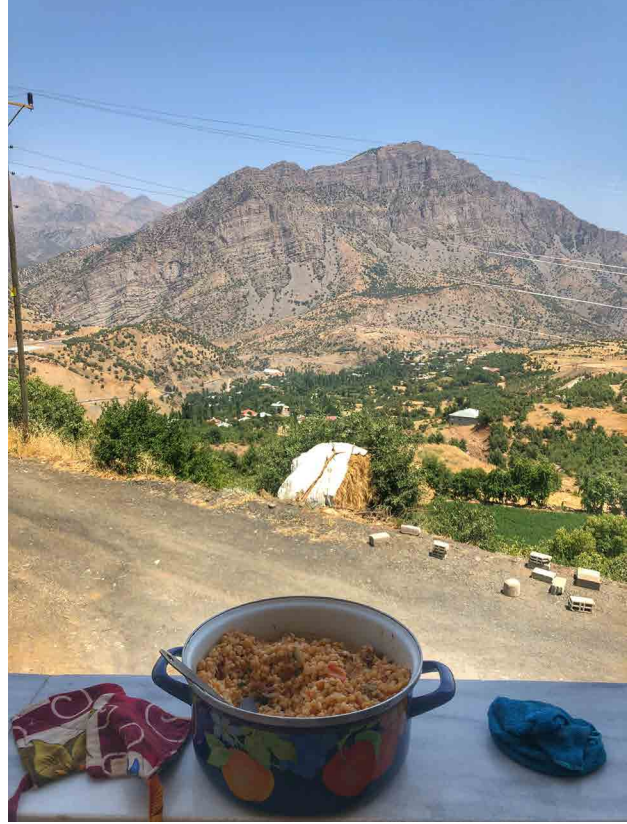
<sup>43</sup> “Köfte” literally translates into meatball, but sometimes it is used for other ingredients (without the inclusion of any meat at all) made into a ball or any other patty shape.

<sup>44</sup> “İçli köfte” refers to *bulgur* (sometimes mixed with semolina, and sometimes with meat) balls stuffed with chopped walnut, finely ground beef or lamb meat, minced onions, tomato paste, and spices.









### **Piyaz**

How delicious onions or sumac can be? “Only this much!” I have to say. I have not eaten such delicious onions or sumac in the last forty years. Hakkâri’s white onion is one of the rarest plants of the unparalleled fauna of the region. This onion, which yields products only every three years, is under special protection. The onion, which is planted in the spring of the first year, gives seeds in the fall of the same year. The seeds are planted during the spring of the second year, and they get *kığss* from these seeds. These seeds, which look like pearl onions, are planted in the spring of the third year, and finally in that year, the genuine Hakkâri white onion is born. When this onion gets mixed with the local Çukurca sumac and some parsley, you get your *piyaz*. This sumac is probably the most delicious sumac I have eaten in my entire life. We have long forgotten these flavors; no doubt about that! There is no way in this world for me to describe the taste...

### **Boned-lamb Kavurma**

If you ask me what I like the most in a dish, I would say, “big chunks of vegetables and boned-meat.” Well, this *kavurma* is just like what I like! Large-cut Hakkâri white onions and boned lamb meat are sautéed in ample amount of butter. However, before beginning this process, the meat is boiled in two glasses of water for one hour over low heat until there is no water. Then, large-cut village peppers are mixed with the meat during the sautéing process. After some more sautéing, it gets ready to be savored with flat bread. In my opinion, what makes this dish unmatched is the last part; mopping the bottom of the pot it is cooked in with bread. Oh my! Not to be forgotten!

### **Çukurca’s Benchmark Brand ZAP**

Temel Ayca, the provincial governor of Çukurca, is not only a real patriot, a competent administrative chief, but truly a very good person also. Someone who is changing the appearance, the history, the fate and the future of Çukurca...

Nowadays, many wonderful things are really taking place in Çukurca. Movies are on in open-air theaters; famous participants are on its radio programs; books are read everywhere; young people are occupied with sports activities; and last but not least, life is beginning once again in its evacuated villages.

Farming is initiated once again in Çukurca. Mr. Governor Temel Ayca and his two volunteer assistants, Ms. Şehadet Çitil and Ms. Asuman Kerkez, first carry out some research with the goal of reproducing the farming products that used to be produced. Then, they fix the old mills, and start experimental production. And, finally, they create the so-called brand ZAP to encompass the produced items. That is where the story begins.

In the very near future, the villages of Çukurca will be repopulated; seeds will be sowed in its fields in the early hours of the day under the rising sun; they will grow and be reaped; and all four corners of our country will be fed with the local and delicious products from here. Çukurca will become synonymous with locality, endeavor, and flavors.



### **Çukurca Tahini**

The sesame used in making the Çukurca tahini is produced by the Çukurca farmers. The sesame is baked slowly in stone ovens for three to four hours, and then, it is ground in small amounts in stone mills without losing its quality. I need to point out; this grinding is done in a 400-year-old stone mill. The sesame, the oven, the mill, and the endeavor; all genuine... All from Çukurca...













Melek Hanım's

# KAHRAMANMARAŞ aka MARAŞ

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*I have written twenty-five books and  
hundreds of articles so far, but I do not think  
that I can build sentences to tell the story  
of Melek Hanım deservedly, and relay her  
profound culinary knowledge. How happy  
I shall be, if only I can manage to begin to do  
so with my meager authorship.*

---

Melek Hanım is an inhabitant of Kahramanmaraş. You can witness the culture that was transferred from her mom and mother-in-law in her home, her meals, her kitchen, her garden, her flowers, her children, and her grandchildren; in short, in every point of her life. Once I had read an article in which it mentioned that if you are playing the piano, and if you are to be called a piano artist, there must be piano players in your family for three generations. In other words, you can be called an artist if and only if one or both of your parents, and one or both of their parents are playing the piano. Well, that is exactly the case of Melek Teyze. It is not possible that such a collection of knowledge, culture, dignity and grace is formed in one generation!



*She is from  
Kahramanmaraş!  
A Kahramanmaraş mother,  
aunt, grandma, sister, and  
lady, who has been growing  
up in a culture God knows  
how long has been around...*

Melek Teyze keeps all the traditional methods alive in her home by preparing her own honey, grape molasses, vegetables, butter, cheese, bread, jams, olives, tarhanas<sup>45</sup>, bastıks<sup>46</sup>, kahkes and sherbets. In other words, instead of buying the provisions of the home from the market readily, she produces them herself. And because that is the case, once you eat her meals, you feel like she is heaven-sent. May God bless your hands! Thank you for the work! Thanks for putting your all!

The foods and drinks Melek Teyze prepares herself:

### **Bowl Pilav**

To make this pilav, you need a copper cooking basin and a relatively small copper bowl you will be placing in its center. Put the lamb meat, onion, tomato paste, salt and pepper in the bowl, and mix it well so that the meat is seasoned. Then, place this bowl in the center of the copper basin turning it upside down. Add some water in the basin, and let it cook for an hour and a half. Next step is to put some genuine Kahramanmaraş local rice around the bowl, and cook it in the water, which must have turned into broth by now. In the final step, burn some butter, and pour it on to the surface of the pilav. Once you take off the bowl in the middle, it is ready to be served and savored. Bon appetite

### **Summer Dolma <sup>47</sup>**

Since nowadays we are hardly aware of the seasons in a culinary sense, I wanted to remind that in the older days, people made *dolma* using different vegetables in summer and winter months. Besides, note that the ingredient used as flavoring agent also changed seasonally. For instance, they used verjuice when it was the right time, or fresh sumac at others...

### **Helise**

Lamb rack and whole wheat are cooked in a copper cauldron, preferably over open wood fire in the garden so that its flavor gets stronger. Then, the bones are separated, and the remaining meat is kept on cooking while being beaten with a wooden pestle. Once some cumin and butter is added in, it is complete.

### **Dönüş Abla <sup>48</sup> Eggs with Zucchini**

Dönüş Abla is Melek Teyze's housemaid, and because she lended a hand to her, she is considered as yet another taste of the house. The eggs she prepares for breakfast by spooning out the inner part of zucchinis and adding in fresh spices is truly tasty.

### **White Cabbage Wraps with Butter-Ghee**

White cabbage wraps is a classical recipe. The meat, the ingredient that gives the tartness, and the rice are all cooked well enough. Then, at that moment when it is about to sit resting, melted butter-ghee is poured on top. In order to keep the delicious smell of the butter-ghee, and to let it flavor the wraps even more, the lid of the pot has to be kept closed.

<sup>45</sup> "*Tarhana*" is a dried food ingredient, based on a fermented mixture of grain and yoghurt (and vegetables and spices depending on the region) or fermented milk. Dry tarhana many times has a texture of coarse, uneven crumbs, and it is most commonly made into a thick soup with water, stock, or milk whereas it is sometimes consumed as a snack in certain parts.

<sup>46</sup> "*Bastik* aka *bastih*"—more commonly named as "*pestil*"—is dried fruit (most of the time either apricots, plums, mulberries or grapes) pulp. It is best exemplified in the English term "fruit leather." Fruit leather is made from pulverizing fruit, then spreading it out to dry (traditionally under the sun) on a piece of cloth. It can be kept for several months in an airtight container.

<sup>47</sup> "*Dolma*" translates into "stuffed". It is a generic name used for any dish made with vegetables (most commonly tomatoes, green bell peppers and eggplants cut in half) stuffed with a mixture of rice and spices, and then cooked with olive oil; or alternatively, a mixture of meat, rice and spices, and then cooked with butter.

<sup>48</sup> "*Abla*" translates into "older sister". In Turkey, it is used for addressing a female person, indicating respect. It comes after the name of the person. It does not necessarily mean that the person is your real sister. The decision to use "*teyze*" or "*abla*" is usually determined based on the age of the addressee. If the addressee is comparatively younger (but older than the person addressing), "*abla*" is used.











### **Vine Leaves Cooked in Strainer**

It is similar to *yaprak sarma* (vine leaves wraps), but instead of the preserved vine leaves used in the traditional recipe, fresh vine leaves are used in this one. The difference is also in how you cook; a strainer is placed in the pot. The wraps are placed and cooked in the strainer that is in the pot so that they do not lose their shapes. The key is low heat, and therefore it takes longer to cook, but the pieces come out in good shape, and in the soft consistency of Turkish Delight, without being under or overcooked.

### **Fresh Green Beans with Meat**

It was twenty-five years ago that I had eaten this dish the last time out of the hands of my dear deceased paternal grandma Zennup Hanım. I could still remember that taste when I tried it here, and with the first bite I took, I came to notice how much I had missed her :(

### **Pilav with Sarıçeltik Rice: The masterpiece of Kahramanmaraş cuisine**

I wrote the short version of the name of the dish in the title. Here, I give you the full name: Kahramanmaraş pilav with Sarıçeltik rice, Maraş sand carrot and *araklıkl* (lamb chops). Well, you see, it is not one of those dishes with such fancy names like “blah blah blah dish served in yada yada yadda bed, topped with reh teh teh sauce”, but rather one of the most legendary recipes of the authentic Turkish Cuisine...

### **Water with sweet-scented geranium**

So... You wake up in the morning in a beautiful vineyard house. You hear the birds chirp. You sit down at the breakfast table. Someone brings drinking water to the table, and it has sweet-scented geranium leaves, begonville petals and rose flowers in it! That is the point you get to understand Melek Hanım's grace.

### **A few of the Kahramanmaraş products Melek Teyze prepares:**

#### **Kahramanmaraş Tarhanası**

July and August is primetime to prepare *tarhana*. And the best part about it is that the main ingredient is the poor man's meal; wheat. You need to cook the wheat in a cauldron—a copper cauldron—over open wood fire until it reaches the consistency of a mash. In the meantime, you mix some cow, goat and sheep yoghurt, and drain it. Keep in mind that the yoghurt has to be triple the amount of wheat. Next, you season this mixture with spices, and let it rest overnight. The following day, you spread the mixture on to either straw mats or thin reeds, which they name as *çöpten çiğ* (raw from sticks). You let it dry there for two days, and store for usage in winter time.

#### **Firik Tarhana**

The fresh tarhana is named as *firik tarhana* in Kahramanmaraş. It is that form of the *tarhana* right before getting completely dry. Its consistency resembles somewhat to that of *bastık* (grape leather). If you wish, you can tear off small pieces, and eat like a snack with dried fruits and nuts, too.







### **Gün Pekmezi - Sun-dried Grape Molasses**

The most delicious variety is that made with Azezi grapes, or Maraş Kabarcığı grapes. After the grape berries are separated from the stems, crushing and straining processes are completed consecutively. The grape juice is poured into broad copper trays and left to cook under the steaming hot sun of Kahramanmaraş for couple of days. The sun-cooked molasses rest until the end of October. Then, it is transferred into a wooden container in which it gets pounded. In the next step, in order to ferment the molasses, some aged honey is added in. It rests once again, this time overnight in this wooden container. Although it is delicious enough to be savored all by itself, it is presented to guests with some tahini, or at times with cucumbers and lettuce.

### **Ravanda Sherbet**

I really liked this. The grapes are picked and cleaned out during vintage season. During the process of harvesting, the dried out or rotten grape berries on the vine are collected in a separate container. Well, these grapes, which seem fit for the garbage, are not discarded. They are juiced, and strained in sacks named as *çamurluk* (mud container) to end up in copper containers for cooking under the sun. It is impossible to forget the flavor!



### **Circassian Culinary Culture in Maraş: “The Kitchen of Ayça Hanım”**

A separate culinary culture that lives on in Kahramanmaraş belongs to the Circassians, and Ms. Ayça Yolkolu Öksüz is the most important representative. She does not only prepare Circassian dishes in her kitchen. She also makes research, writes books, lectures and organizes workshops in order to transfer this culture to the next generations. Her book “*Hüzün Aş Olunca*” (“When Grief Turns into Meal”), in which she explains about the traditional Circassian cuisine, is a masterpiece. We are guests to her home, where we are welcomed with genuine Circassian hospitality, and we taste the delightful Circassian dishes.

### **Cırdingış**

Lamb shanks are boiled well. Big chunks of dough are made into balls, and boiled in the same water where the lamb shanks were boiled. First, the dough balls are placed on a serving plate, then the lamb shanks on them. Ready to be served to the guests.

### **Basta with Rice**

*Basta* is a Circassian dish my dear deceased maternal grandma İnci Hanım used to make with great love. Although the original version is prepared with bulgur, because of my wheat-free diet, we used to savor it with rice. Bulgur and chicken are boiled together for quite a long time; until they reach the consistency of a mash. The mash is filled into a mold, and turned upside down on a plate. The final touch before serving is to drizzle over a sauce made with butter and *acuka*<sup>49</sup>.

### **Mejage**

In other words, corn bread prepared with tail fat pieces. Since I love both tail fat and bread, for me this stands as a masterpiece.

<sup>49</sup> “*Acuka*” is a spicy hot dip, paste or spread with variations of ingredients depending on the region. Most commonly used ingredients are red pepper and/or tomato paste, walnuts, olive oil, bread crumbs, and garlic.











## Where to eat in Kahramanmaraş

### 52-Year-Old Saray Restaurant

When the restaurant is within an industrial zone, and it is over half a century old, then, sure enough, the flavors have long settled in. Just the flavors? No... Ethics and manners of a tradesman, the high level of grasp over the work, and mastery follows. “The Story”—the new sense of this century—is exceedingly present in this restaurant. That is why the Turkish cuisine will succeed; be sure of that! It has a long, a very long story. Every dish is very delicious in the Saray Restaurant. However, its *döner* shook me deep down. So much so that my company Oğuz Yenihayat and I have decided to include this *döner* in the top three in our personal best *döner* list.

### Yanyanacı Eli Böğründe

*Eli Böğründe* (Hand on Heart) or *Yanyana* (Next to Each Other) is one of the most well known and popular dishes of Kahramanmaraş. After the lamb meat is placed in the center of a broad cooking tray or broad casserole, tomatoes and peppers are added in to surround the meat. It is crucial that all the ingredients are locally produced. Plenty of garlic and tail fat are added on top before the tray goes into the oven. It is best served with flat bread and generously foamy *ayran*.

### Küçük Ev Paça - Little House Feet Soup Restaurant

Cooking sheep head and feet constitute the field of expertise for the people of Kahramanmaraş. They are really good at it, and they are still cooking them traditionally; in traditional cauldrons and using traditional techniques. Consequently, the flavor becomes exquisite, and eating them turns into a delight. In my opinion, the trick for the feet soup in Kahramanmaraş is the sauce they prepare with the sumac juice and garlic. This really carries both the feet soup and the other soups to another level.

### 100-Year-Old Özdoğan Bakery

*Peksimet*, *kahke*, Kahramanmaraş style *katmer* with grape molasses, Kahramanmaraş *çöreği*<sup>50</sup> with sesame seeds, and dozens of other varieties are all baked in the stone-oven using the oldest recipes. All crispy or crunchy... We have no more words to spare...

### Saray Butcher Shop

I have been visiting this shop every time I visit Kahramanmaraş since the very first time. Lamb chops are placed on a tin sheet, and topped with tail fat. On a separate piece of tin sheet, some tomatoes and peppers are lined. Both are sent to the stone oven right across from the butcher shop where they get cooked for ten minutes. First, you clear the tin sheets off the food by eating. Then, you sprinkle some salt and black pepper on the sheets, and mop off the remaining bits of flavors, leaving a mirror clean piece of tin. You end up with saying, “*Ellerine sağlık Usta!*”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> “*Çörek*” is a round loaf of bread in its most broad sense. However, the word encompasses a whole range of different types. It can be savory or sweet, round or braided, small or big, and with a variety of spice additions. if you want to specify that the *çörek* belongs to, or comes from a certain place, the word *çöreği* followed by the name of the city (or person) it comes from is used: *Kahramanmaraş çöreği*.

<sup>51</sup> “*Ellerine sağlık!*” translates to “God bless your hands!” It is commonly used in Turkey (including homes) when someone wants to thank the person who cooks the meal.



### **Yaşar Ice Firik Ice Cream**

With your permission, I would like to make the boldest claim of the entire Book of Travels: I ate the most delicious ice cream of the world in Kahramanmaraş, and no one can make a better tasting ice cream!

So clear and net! One of the most important reasons for this is the *sahlep*<sup>52</sup> that grows in the mountains of Kahramanmaraş; the second one being the quality of the milk that comes from the free-browsing goats in the mountains.

When the Kahramanmaraş ice cream is fresh, it is named as *firik ice cream*. Since I do not think that any other ice cream will be so tasty when fresh, I consider that only the Kahramanmaraş ice cream deserves the title of “firik ice cream”. Yaşar Ice is the new shop of the previous Yaşar Pastanesi (Patisserie). Couple of times during the night after 9:00 pm, they make fresh Kahramanmaraş ice cream. I do not know if you can catch it. You may be able to eat a few other desserts elsewhere that are so tasty, but you cannot eat any other ice cream that is tastier.

One could come to Kahramanmaraş for nothing else but this ice cream. If you are anywhere within 250 kilometers from the city going to somewhere else, do not hesitate to re-route yourself into Kahramanmaraş. If you are living in any of the neighboring cities, you can come for an evening tea, have some ice cream, and go back home. Well-worth the trip!

### **1 Ekşi 1 Tatlı – 1 Sour 1 Sweet**

I consider returning to work for your homeland after attending some of the best schools of the world abroad as a great virtue. It is an indication of true patriotism; to build your life designed around your homeland despite the fact that all the doors of the world has been wide opened for you. Well, that is exactly the story of Eylül and Hikmet. On one side, they keep running their usual businesses in Kahramanmaraş; and on the other, they pursue a road of traditional wheat races and real bread. Since they are after traditional breads, our meeting was inevitable. I am happy to see that using the most precious Anatolian wheats, they have re-introduced the previous traditional breads of Kahramanmaraş to its inhabitants. But that is not all! They have added the breakfast foods they have collected from all corners of Turkey into their menu. Oh, well, if you add some Rize tea to go with it all, then you are set to go as a bakery and a breakfast cafe. And so they did! May their route be clear, and their shop abundant!

Note:

*But I have to congratulate the people of Kahramanmaraş. A cuisine can only be so well-hidden! Shame on you! How could they possibly have eaten so many good meals, and not called friends over from other parts Turkey to share even once?:)*

<sup>52</sup> “*Sahlep*” plant is some type of wild orchid with purple flowers. It has a two-tuber root that is gathered in season. After these roots are dried, they are turned into powder, and used in food or drinks.











## Eggs with Zucchini

*2 zucchinis*

*5 eggs*

*1/2 red pepper*

*1 table spoon chopped onions*

*1 dessert spoon flour*

*Half a tea glass (about one espresso cup) milk*

*Komili Organic Extra-Virgin Olive Oil*

*1 tea spoon sesame seeds*

*1 table spoon labne<sup>53</sup> cheese*

*Black pepper, rock salt*

- Slice the red peppers finely, and stir-fry them in Komili Organic Extra-Virgin Olive Oil together with the onions.
- In the meantime, take out the seedy part of the zucchinis, and slice them fine.
- Add the sliced zucchinis on to the onions, and stir-fry for a few minutes.
- On the side, whisk the eggs, flour, milk, salt and black pepper.
- Add on to the mixture in the pan, and let it cook.
- Sprinkle the sesame seeds on to the surface of egg mixture. Once one side is cooked, carefully turn over the other side to cook.
- Transfer to the service plate; add some *labne* cheese and Komili Organic Extra-Virgin Olive Oil on top; and serve.

<sup>53</sup> “*Labne*” is a soft, thick and creamy cheese, similar in texture to cream cheese, made from strained yoghurt.











# MAMURAT'ÜL AZİZ, EL-AZİZ, ELAZIĞ, HARPUT

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*It was one of the most delicious parts of my  
journey.*

*My days passed by in a vineyard house en  
route to Keban while eating and drinking,  
sleeping on the flat-roof, and singing folk  
songs. The meals we prepared with the  
produce we collected from the garden, the ice-  
cold water from the well, the intermittent view  
of Lake Hazar, and many other things  
I cannot begin to count here... Come join me;  
let us take a look at the folk songs we sang.*

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## **Music in Elazığ; The Folk Songs**

The folk songs of Harput that are played with the Classical Turkish Music instruments are quite famous. Local folk songs are sung out loud at gatherings, which are named as *Kürsübaşı* (by the podium). These gatherings are alternatively called as *Meşk* (Practice) evenings. However, music is not the only activity of these nights; the priority is on conciliating and making peace between people who are miffed at each other. Besides, matters of consultation and benevolence are discussed. Only when all these matters are taken care of, treats—which serve as the icing on the cake for the conversations—are distributed. The *meşks* which take place in the form of *fasıl*<sup>54</sup> always begin with “Harput Peşrevi”<sup>55</sup>, and continue with the folk songs.

<sup>54</sup> “*Fasıl*” means “section or part”. It refers to the playing and singing of pieces in a specific order. It is a classical Turkish musical form.

<sup>55</sup> “*Peşrev*” is an instrumental form in Turkish classical music. It is the name of the first piece of music played during a group performance called a *fasıl*.



Couple of the important local folk songs have titles such as; “Has it snowed on the mountains of Harput?”, “Mamoş”, “This (place) is (called)Huş.” “This (place) is (called)Huş.” was written for the soldiers, who left from Harput for Yemen, and it is many times referred as Yemen Türküsü (The Yemen Folk Song). It happens to be one of the most well-known folk songs in Turkey, but hardly anyone knows that it belongs to this region.

*“I got on the road to the city from  
Hüseynik,  
Heartbreak had its toll on my arm,  
Lord, have mercy on your subject! Pity;  
this young life of mine has been  
wasted.*

*Why on earth, fate puts all this torment  
on me?”*

Traces of several *makams*<sup>56</sup> of the classical Turkish music is present in the Harput folk songs. Harput has an important place in “Turkish” music, because the sui generis structure of the Harput music creates a different harmony for the Turkish music.

#### **Lake Hazar**

For God’s sake! I have to confess; it had completely slipped out of my mind that there is such a lake here. In fact, I guess

I was not even aware of its existence. Its scenery and the color of its water were worth seeing. The summer houses along its shoreline, the gardens, the coolness and the quietness altogether gave me a sense of settling in there forever. I believe if I come to Elazığ in the future, I will want to stay along the shore of Lake Hazar again.

#### **Elazığ Cuisine**

Everything I ate in and around Elazığ was extremely tasty. There are two main reasons for this: First is the dexterity of the Elazığ people, and the second is the fruits, vegetables and water of Elazığ. Last but not least, we need to add the *sac* (convex sheet metal griddle).

#### **Pepper Fry**

First step is to prong the Elazığ peppers to put some salt in them. Then, they are fried in the local butter. Topped with peeled and diced tomatoes they are cooked further. It is served in the pan it is cooked, not on plates.

#### **Patila**

A dough is rolled thin into phyllo. Similar to *gözleme*<sup>57</sup>, they can be filled with potatoes, meat, or *çökelek*<sup>58</sup> before being sealed. A sauce made with butter and milk is brushed on the *patilas* before being cooked over the griddle. They are cut into smaller pieces before serving.

#### **Green Beans Sauté**

Green beans are first boiled, then sautéed in butter together with onions. Eggs are cracked on top of the green beans, cooked slightly more, and served.

<sup>56</sup> “*Makam*” is a system of melody types used in Turkish classical music and Turkish folk music. It provides a complex set of rules for composing and performance. Each *makam* specifies a unique intervallic structure (*cinsler*) and melodic development (*seyir*).

<sup>57</sup> “*Gözleme*” is a traditional savory Turkish flatbread and pastry dish. The dough is usually unleavened, and made only with flour, salt and water, but *gözleme* can be made from yeast dough as well. The dough is rolled thin, then filled with various toppings, sealed, and cooked over a griddle.

<sup>58</sup> “*Çökelek*” is a kind of unsalted and light cheese made by boiling the whey left over from making feta cheese.











### **Dried Pepper Fry**

The peppers, which were cut and dried in summer time, are first seethed, then, fried in butter. There is an alternate recipe with onions and pepper or tomato paste.

### **Erişte<sup>59</sup> Soup**

This is a soup made with *erişte*, which is made with a hard dough prepared with flour, water and salt, winter *kavurma*<sup>60</sup>, tomato paste and dried mint.

### **Fresh Vegetable Dolma**

Fresh seasonal vegetables are stuffed with full-fat ground meat and *bulgur* as usual, and dried ground Elazığ green peppers are added as the specialty of the region.

### **Sırın**

Flat bread dough is made into a roll, and cut into finger-thick pieces. The pieces are lined in the tray. Some yoghurt with little ground garlic is poured on top, and it is all set to rest. After the addition of heated Elazığ butter, it is ready to be served.

### **Harput Köftesi - Jumbo Köftes**

Fine *bulgur*, basil, Elazığ's hot dried green pepper, onions, non-fat ground meat, and chopped parsley are worked together. They are made into *köftes* slightly bigger than the size of chickpeas. The *köftes* are cooked in little water that is sauced with some tomato paste and butter. Alternatively, they can be consumed without being cooked.

### **Üfeleme - Crumblings**

Flat bread is crumbled and wetted with some chicken broth. Some butter is heated, and boiled and shredded chicken meat is added in. After turning the chicken meat a few times in butter, it is added on to the crumbled and wetted bread pieces. Ready to be served...

### **Gömme - Burying**

One whole piece of home-made Elazığ phyllo dough is laid on the counter or table. The mixture prepared with *winter kavurma* is spread on the phyllo dough. This process is repeated until you get about 15-20 layers. Butter is poured on the top before going into the oven. Served warm right out of the oven.

### **Slice Dolma**

Hot pepper and salt is added into ground meat before it gets worked out. It is made into small *köftes*. Eggplants are diced and fried. The *köftes* and the fried eggplants are put in a cooking pot. Some tomatoes and peppers are added, and all is cooked together.

### **Süslü Fidoş - Fancy Fidoş**

Eggplants are fried. *Köftes*, tomatoes and peppers are placed in a tray, and all is cooked in the oven. We can say that it is similar to Islim kebab, but with *köftes*.

<sup>59</sup> “*Erişte*” is a type of pasta made traditionally with flour, water, eggs, and salt. They are like small pieces of flat noodles or fettucine.

<sup>60</sup> “*Kavurma*” is a generic term used for sautéed or fried meats. It also refers to the method of dry-frying (rendering down the fat and juice) to preserve the meat for consumption in winter time as is the case in here.







### **Elazığ Stuffed Köftes**

First, some full-fat ground meat is dry-fried. Butter and ample amount of onions are added in. Lastly, spices, tomato paste and walnuts are mixed. On the side, non-fat ground meat and fine bulgur are worked out. Small pieces in the size of walnuts are torn from the dough; made into first, balls in the palms of hands; then, into spheres with shallow centers so that the meat filling can be stuffed in. Once the balls are sealed, they are cooked in a liquidly sauce made with water, butter and tomato paste. It is served together with its sauce.

### **Köftes with Chickpeas**

Chickpeas are ground in a hand-mill. Some hot water is added in, and it is let to rest. Basil, onions, tomato paste and bulgur are the next ingredients to be added in before it gets worked out. Relatively larger *köftes* are prepared, and boiled in water. At the time of serving, some butter is poured over.

### **Söğültme - Roasting**

Eggplants are roasted in butter and garlic for 15 minutes. Ready to be served...

### **Onion Dolma**

Large onions are cooked in water. Ground meat, fine bulgur and spices are kneaded, and made into *köftes*, which are then wrapped around with the onions. They are lined up in a cooking pan filled with water with tomato paste. In the last ten minutes of cooking, the sumac, which had been previously soaked in water, is strained, and added into the pan. After cooking with sumac for ten minutes, it is served.

### **Cheese & Bread**

Fresh full-fat sheep cheese is let to rest for a day. After being mixed with some sugar, it is sent to the bakery. The baker uses it as a topping on *lavaş*<sup>61</sup> bread, and cooks it in his wood-burning oven. It gets served fresh out of the bakery.

### **Mulberry Flour**

Dried mulberries are pounded in a large stone mortar. Separately, some bitter almonds are boiled in water to sweeten them. Layers of mulberry powder and boiled almonds are stored in tin boxes. They used to be a winter-time snack.

### **Stone Bread**

An *akıtma* batter is prepared. Pouring small batches to make very thin pieces, the *akıtmaz* are fried in a pan one at a time. As the fried *akıtmaz* get stacked on top of each other, after each *akıtma*, some butter and walnuts are placed. At the time of serving, some sherbet is poured over. Because it used to be prepared over a piece of stone in the older times, it is called as “Stone Bread”.

### **Well, so, what does one eat when in the market in Elazığ?**

Toast with *köftes*

Yusuf Usta, the Lamb-chops Cook

Breakfast at Zertaşlar overlooking Elazığ

<sup>61</sup> “*Lavaş*” is a round or oval-shaped, soft, thin unleavened flat bread made in a *tandır*.







## Tepsi Balcanı - Eggplant Dish in a Tray

*6 eggplants*

*6 tomatoes*

*6 peppers*

*10 cloves of garlic*

*1 onion*

*500 grams full-fat ground meat*

*2 table spoons tomato paste*

*Black pepper and rock salt*

*Komili Riviera Olive Oil for frying*

- Dice the tomatoes and eggplants.
- Slice the peppers thin.
- Fry the eggplants in Komili Riviera Olive Oil, and let them shed off the absorbed oil on a piece of paper laid in a plate.
- Chop the onions, and dry-fry them with the ground meat without adding in any oil or butter (using the fat of the meat).
- Add in 1 spoon tomato paste, salt and black pepper, keep stirring for couple more minutes.
- Place half of the eggplants, tomatoes and peppers in the oven tray. Top it with the cooked ground meat and onion mixture.
- Add the garlic cloves.
- Put the remaining eggplants, tomatoes and peppers in the tray.
- Mix the remaining tomato paste with 1 tea glass (about 2 espresso cups) of water. Pour this into the tray over the ingredients.
- Cook for 30 minutes in the pre-heated oven at 200 degrees Celcius, or send it to the market bakery to cook it in their stone-oven.
- Serve it with *ayran ve lavaş* bread.







# DİYARBAKIR

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*“Neither you nor Diyarbakır figured me out!*

*If only you knew  
how much I loved you both...”*

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We are in Diyarbakır now; one of the most interesting parts of the journey. I have Oğuz Yenihayat, who is an expert on food and beverages, and my friend Şehadet Çitil—otherwise called as Hevsel Garden—, who is an inhabitant of Diyarbakır, and also a gastronomy worker, accompanying me. Oğuz and I had been to Diyarbakır numerous times. And Şehadet is a true local. Now, if you are ready, let us start a very delicious, but I mean seriously delicious tour of Diyarbakır.



### **Kahvaltıcı Edip - Edip, the Breakfast Cook**

Mention breakfast in Diyarbakır, and the foremost place that comes to mind is Hasan Paşa Hanı. We go slightly further than that towards the Mardin Kapı (Mardin Gate); and walk through the gate; take the first right, and reach Kahvaltıcı Edip. The moment I notice the eggs with peppers and *kavurma* I understand that we have come to a really good place. Kahvaltıcı Edip prepares a sumptuous breakfast for us. Every product he chooses is very delicious, and in rivalry with each other in uniqueness. However, the Diyarbakır sheep yoghurt that he made us taste is especially good; it is one of the two most delicious yoghurts I have tasted during this journey. If you are wondering which the second one was, let me tell you; it was the yoghurt I ate at Badıllı's table, in Şanlıurfa's Bölücek Village. The taste of these two yoghurts are still on my palate. I am really in love with sheep's yoghurt! I mean, big time! :)

### **Mecitağa Bakery 1913**

It is Diyarbakır's oldest surviving bakery, which is wonderful. Two of their products—Diyarbakır's open bread and their specialty product of *yağlı* (buttered) bread—are pretty famous. Besides, they cook the meals prepared at homes or make *lahmacun* with the meat toppings prepared at the butcher shops. At that moment when we were about to get in through the door, a Diyarbakır casserole was just being taken out of the oven. What a scene it was!

### **Kebapçı Hacı Halit - Hacı Halit, the Kebab Cook**

You can find both kebaps and Diyarbakır's home style dishes at Hacı Halit's shop. He makes both charcoaled eggplant kebab and eggplants cooked in oven. If you go there around noon, you can taste the dishes in their most delicious and pleasant condition.

### **Sülüklü Han**

We make way towards the Sülüklü Han inside the Ironsmiths' Market. The Ironsmiths' Market is a must-see place in Diyarbakır. It is where you come to understand what labor, caliber and bread stands for. We take a tea break in Sülüklü Han. Several old hans and stores of Diyarbakır have been faithfully restored back to their original conditions and beauty, and they are now open for service to the public. The sounds of music played, and the warm breezes blowing are just the right things to make you feel that you are in Diyarbakır.

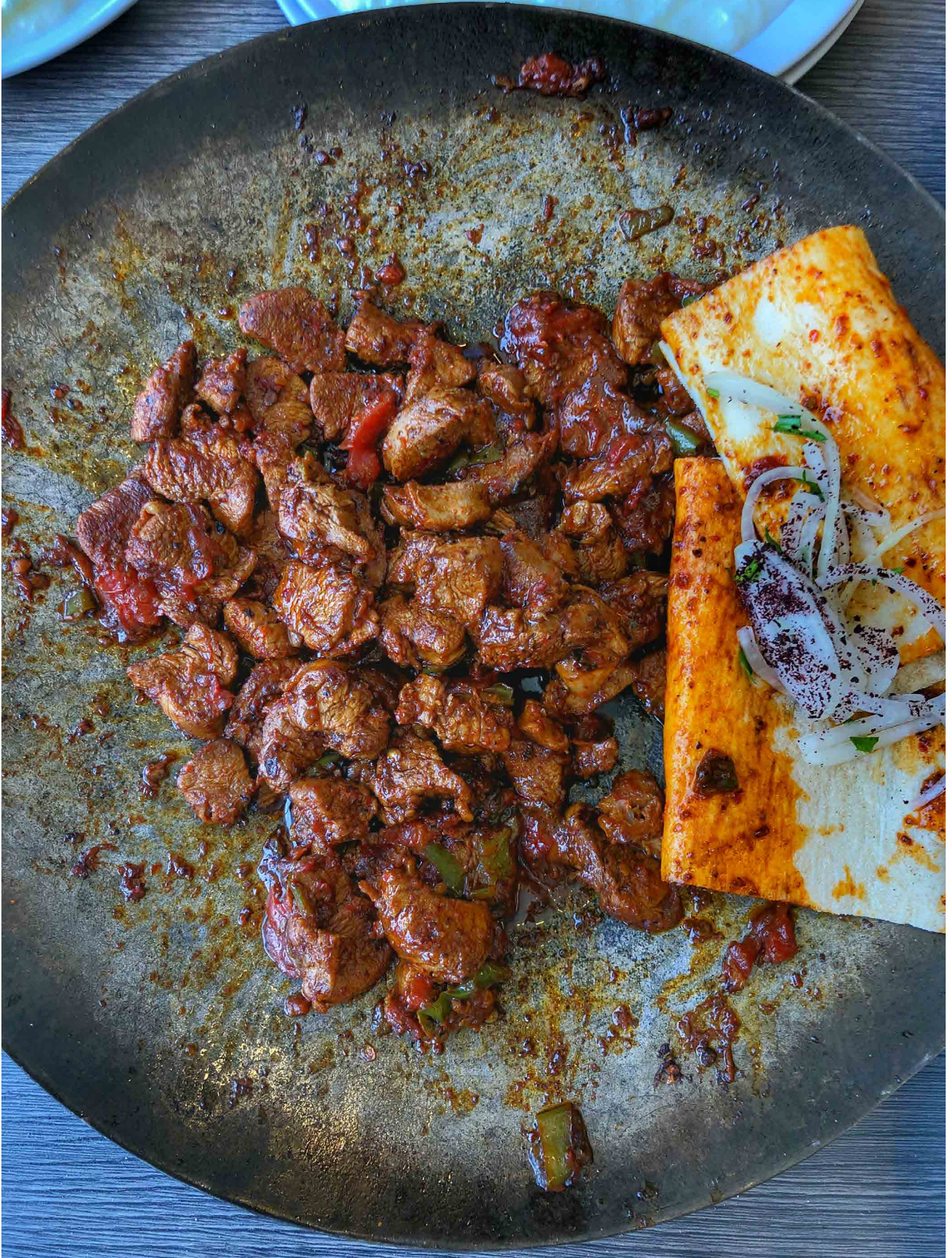
### **Baharatçı Kör Yusuf - Blind Yusuf, the Spice-Seller**

As the third generation member of a family continuing in the same business, he is one of the traditional tradesmen of Diyarbakır. He inherits his name from his grandfather. The grandfather, who starts this business by the late 1800s, happens to be blind. Both his name and fame derives from here. Since the grandfather is blind, he feels and picks the spices by their scents. He easily determines the most flavorful spices by touching the grains and smelling the aromas. This is the reason why the best spices of Diyarbakır were sold in this store. And they still are...















### **Diyarbakır Lahmacun Merkezi - Diyarbakır Lahmacun Center**

If you asked me where one can find the best tradesmen, I would say here! As a matter of fact, every single tradesman in the East is very good, but I believe I champion this place slightly more. I always state that *lahmacun* has been under the monopoly of Urfa and Gaziantep. It shouldn't be! It cannot be anyway! Once you eat *lahmacun* here, you come to realize that very clearly. And when the pide with meat cubes right out of the oven appeared... Oh my! Just the sight of it was enough to hint its tastiness. Make sure to visit this shop. Even if you are full, at least try their tea.

### **Ciğerim<sup>62</sup> Restaurant**

We are here to savor the Diyarbakır oven cuisine. The spicy hot casserole prepared with seasonal tomatoes and eggplants is just fit to eat in the scorching heat of Diyarbakır.) How does that idiom go? “The hair of the dog that bit you”... “Like cures like.” You heat the body by eating spicy hot in hot weather. In this way, you bring the temperature of your body closer to the outside temperature, which eventually creates a cooling effect on the body. I take it one step further; by eating hot green pepper next to the already hot casserole dish, I create an air-conditioner. :)

Both the casserole dish and the lamb shank are delicious. The roles of the stone oven, the mastery of the cook, and the local tomatoes and eggplants are crucial in the success. It is not always possible to find so many of the factors that enhance the flavors all in one place.

### **Diyarbakır Museum**

I have a Museum Card. And this makes me very happy. I visit the museums everywhere I go and give it time both because I have the convenience of the card, and also because I like it. Diyarbakır is a historic city where seven different civilizations have been founded on top of each other. That is exactly why you have to visit the museum. Besides, the museum buildings, its garden and the terrace in the back are worth a visit in their own.

### **Hevsel Garden**

Hevsel Garden takes its name from Diyarbakır. A mother and daughter join their forces to create products, which they make by adhering totally to traditional methods. They start with distributing them to their neighbors. Then, the circle gets bigger and bigger consecutively with their acquaintances, the neighboring cities, and finally all parts of Turkey. In this way, not only they are contributing to the women's employment but also helping protect the local products. Moreover, they are serving the development of the region. And last but not least, they are providing real and good food for the consumers. You can reach them via their Instagram account (@hevselbahcesi) to check out their products, and to order if you wish.

### **Kelek<sup>63</sup> Sold in a Pushcart**

Upon hearing the man's voice shouting “kelekkk keleeekkkkk”, we automatically steered ourselves that way. The sight of a big block of ice and peeled *keleks* around it, all placed on a pushcart, and the seller with a big knife in one hand, and the salt shaker in the other... When we asked for some, he cut a *kelek* into four, sprinkled some salt on, and handed them to us. Make sure to taste it, if you come across with a *kelek* seller in the streets of Diyarbakır.

<sup>62</sup> “*Ciğer*” is a homonym. It means “liver” and also “heart” (not as a bodily organ, but rather like my dear, or as in sweetheart) “*Ciğerim*” literally translates to “My liver” or “My heart”.

<sup>63</sup> “*Kelek*” is a type of unripe melon, which has a taste in between a cucumber and a melon.











### **Diyarbakır Liver**

Mention Diyarbakır, and one thinks of liver dishes; and mention liver dishes, one thinks of Diyarbakır... Clear as that! As a person from Kilis, and thus Antep, I have eaten liver dishes in every city where liver dishes are made. I have visited all liver-specialty restaurants. In my opinion, Diyarbakır is the winner! There are three addresses that I visit with great joy. Each one is a reason in its own for a visit to Diyarbakır. These are: Ciğerci Apo (Apo, the Liver Cook), Ciğerci Umut (Umut, the Liver Cook) and Xale Meheme (Mehmet Dayı <sup>64</sup>)

### **Diyarbakır Kadayıfı**

Speaking of desserts in Diyarbakır, *burma kadayıf* (twisted kadayıf) takes the top of the list! The aroma of its butter, its hand-cut shredded strings, its pistachios, and the labor put into its creation... All of these do not easily come together in one place. But then, when they do come together, the reputation travels around the country. Sıtkı Usta and Levent Usta are the patriarchs of this subject. You can eat numerous kinds of this specialty in their shop, but my vote goes for the most traditional Diyarbakır *burma kadayıf*. Especially when it comes out of the oven all fresh... A slice from this tray after it cools down a little... That is all you need!

### **Tea at Mardin Kapı (Gate)**

We spent the entire day running around. I mean running around, and eating non-stop. Now, we are by Mardin Kapı to have some tea. We have the view overlooking to the “The Plains of Kırklar Mountain”. There are pigeons around us... The melody of those sad Diyarbakır songs is in our ears... It is the evening hours; the weather is cooler, and the crimson color of the setting sun is prevalent everywhere. This was another one of those moments... I wanted it to last for a thousand years. Our day in Diyarbakır was coming to an end. New chapters of our Book of Travels in the East were about to unfold.

<sup>64</sup> “*Dayı*” translates into “maternal uncle”. In Turkey, it is used for addressing a male person, indicating respect. It comes after the name of the person. It does not necessarily mean that the person is your real uncle. “Amca” (paternal uncle) and “dayı” may be used interchangeably depending on the region, but *dayı* is slightly more colloquial, and *amca* somewhat stresses the age difference more.











# GASTRONOMY IN **VAN**

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*Van is a city in the East, which I have visited several times, and where I have been entertained with red-carpet treatment. This city fascinated me with its scenery, richness, and people... I have completed two full circles around Lake Van at two different times. I would want everyone to have this experience.*

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Van happens to be one of the most predominant cities of the area. I had written about its food products, dishes and culture in Volume I, “Komili Travel Book of Flavors”. Now I will be telling you about its restaurants and market food.



Before everything else, I want to point out that Van is a city, where one can easily spend forty-eight savory hours. You can start planning your trip now.

### Van Breakfast

The reason why Van Breakfast is so famous, and why it has so much variety lies in a tradition:

One day in the past, the man of the household in one of the Van houses gets up very early to go to work in the crop fields. He does not have the heart to wake his wife to prepare breakfast in such wee hours of the morning. He leaves the house picking just a piece of food to eat as breakfast later. All the other workers in the fields do the same that day. So, each one takes out whatever he had brought, and everyone shares their food for breakfast next to some tea they brew together. Starting that day, this turns into a tradition.

Here are the sine qua non items of Van breakfast:

Van herbed cheese

Buffalo *kaymak* in *sahan*<sup>65</sup>

Walnuts

Çatak black honeycomb honey

*Cacık*<sup>66</sup>

*Murtağa* (Toast butter and flour in a pan. After taking the pan off the stove, add whisked eggs into it, and mix. You can serve it as is, or with some honey on top.)

*Kavut* (A largely milled variety of wheat grains are toasted in butter, and served. It can be served as is, or with some honey or jam on top.)

Tahini and grape molasses

Various fresh cheese kinds

Various bread kinds; *sılap pide*, *çöre (kete)*, thin *lavaş*, *tandır* bread.

### Süphan Breakfast House

*Kavut*, *cacık*, butter, *murtağa*, *market çörek*, *buffalo kaymak* and Van cheeses... It is up to you how to eat it; all of it together, or your pick... If you like, you can have a simple version with only honey, *kavut* and bread. Should you prefer a wrap, you can fill a *market çörek* with these ingredients and make it into a wrap. In other words, there is neither an end nor a recipe for a Van breakfast. There is a lot of variety, and so many flavors.

### Birkoç Restaurant

It was the grandfather that was in charge in 1935, and the father in 1953. Now, it is the third generation that handles it all. They have two types of *kavurma*; plain, and with a mixture of dill, parsley and yoghurt. They are in rivalry, but I liked the one with yoghurt slightly better. There is only one problem; you just want to keep dipping your bread into the sauce in the plate, and mop it all clean.

<sup>65</sup> “*Sahan*” is a shallow pan with two handles; traditionally made of copper.

<sup>66</sup> “*Cacık*” is a cold dip, soup, or sauce depending on the preferred consistency. It is made of strained yoghurt or regular yogurt (diluted with water if preferred) mixed with small diced or grated cucumbers, garlic (optional) and salt. Sometimes olive oil, and herbs such as dill or mint are also added in.











### Esen Döner

The East is where you find the best *döner*... I believe this is the sentence I have repeated the most during this journey. Here we are; yet in another shop proving this. A lamb *döner* that is prepared a certain—not exaggerated—amount fresh daily! I mean; if the *döner* gets too big, it loses its flavor, but if it is stuck on the stick in a smaller amount, it becomes savory. Just like the taste of the dishes cooked in cauldrons versus pots. Plain and simple, without exaggeration... While the *döner* is being broiled, pieces of some Van market bread are rubbed on to the *döner* to soak in the fat. But then, you get puzzled; the bread or the *döner*? In any case, once you are served, you immediately discard this question out of your mind, and devour the dish. In my opinion, *döner* has to be prepared with lamb meat!

### Hacı Halil's Place

This shop is one of the most important addresses of this Book of Travels. But, you need to be here in August for this statement to hold true, because it is the peak time for the Gevaş tomatoes. They are the tastiest in this month.

It would be fair to say that cooked Gevaş tomato salad was the most delicious dish I have eaten during the entire journey. Hacı Halil Amca<sup>67</sup> is a kebab cook and he is really in charge of his place... All the meat dishes and kebabs are very delicious, but the tomato salad is to die for. Another factor that makes him so divine is the *kaymak* he brings to the table. In fact, it is some type of full-fat yoghurt covered with a thick layer of *kaymak*. I would not hesitate to travel to Van from very long distances abroad just to eat the *kaymak* and the tomato salad in this shop.

### Özpulatlar Bakery

Sinan Usta's grandfather runs a mill in Başkale. However, his interest lies in the products not the flour. So, he decides to be by the oven rather than the mill. His bakery is the most beautiful and most traditional bakery in Van. He reads about, and researches on the wheats he had learnt from his grandfather. He is passionate about making the traditional breads, and keeping them alive. *Van çörek*, *tandır lavaş* and *taptapa bread* are just a few of the Van breads that Sinan Usta makes. He not only cooks in an oven, but also in a *tandır*, which he feeds with wood. His breads are so delicious that you can eat them without condiments or meals...

### Van Keledoşu

Adem Usta is another one of the important master-chefs of Van. His specialty lies in Van cuisine... Therefore, we get the recipe of *keledoş*, which is one of the staple dishes of the Van cuisine.

The distinct ingredients for *keledoş* are *heliz*<sup>68</sup> and *ak pancar*<sup>69</sup> herbs. Chickpeas, wheat, lentils, regional herbs, and meat are all cooked in water, each in a separate pot. In a copper cooking-pot, the boiled meat is sautéed together with some onions in some butter. All the other ingredients, which were previously boiled and strained, are added into the copper pot to cook further. Then, some *çökelek* or drained yoghurt is used as a liaison before the fire is turned off. At the time of servicing, some heated butter with powdered paprika is drizzled over.

<sup>67</sup> “Amca” translates into “paternal uncle”. In Turkey, it is used for addressing a male person, indicating respect. It comes after the name of the person. It does not necessarily mean that the person is your real uncle. The decision to use “amca” versus “abi (brother)” is usually determined based on the age of the addressee. If the addressee is comparatively younger (but older than the person addressing), “abi” is used.

<sup>68</sup> “Heliz” or “helis” is a plant (herb) growing at high altitudes of mountains. It is picked in spring when the snow is melting, and the soil is wet. It is an easy to digest, stomach-friendly plant.

<sup>69</sup> “Ak pancar” translates into “white beets” but it has nothing to do with the beet bulb. It is also known as spidang. It is a type of herb collected in high plateaus.











### **Sengeser**

We have arrived at Gücüyener Family's home in Edremit. We will be having dinner on their terrace with a view. There is *sengeser* and *keledoş* on the table. Both dishes are extraordinary, but I fall in love with *sengeser*, because I love lentils. *Sengeser* is a dish that is prepared with only a few ingredients; green lentils, *çökelek* and *erişte*, but it is a masterpiece of the Anatolian cuisine. The family spends their summers in their home in Edremit, and in winter time they live either in Van city-center, or Ankara. After the meal is over, the table is cleaned, and thin flat bread, cheese and tea is served.

### **Herbed Cheese**

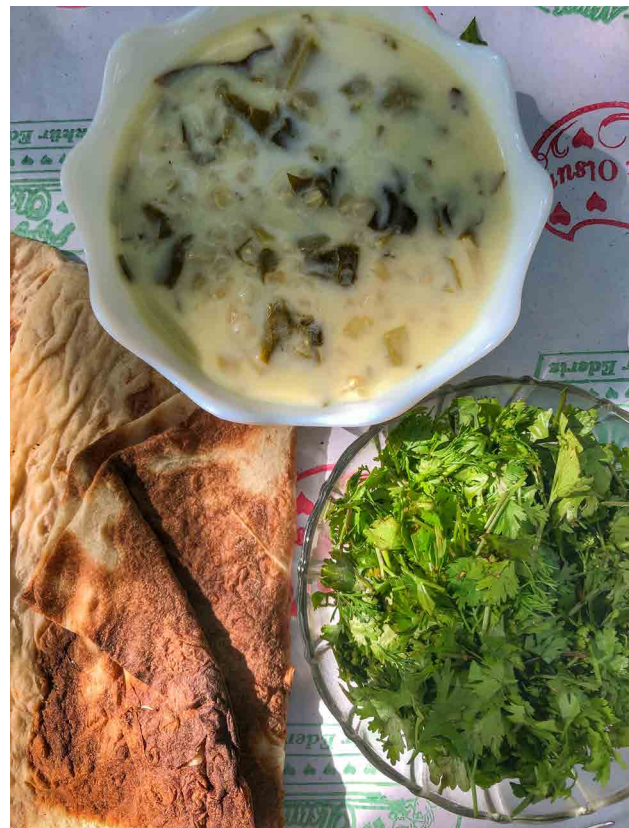
Since we were served cheese in the previous table, I wanted to continue with writing about cheese. We were surprised, because it is not a custom in Turkey to serve bread and cheese after dinner. Well, it turns out that it is an old tradition in Van. We were told that the cheese that is wrapped around in flat bread is called "shepherd's bite". After eating a few pieces of shepherd's bites, we inquire about the underlying reason for this tradition. We were told that eating cheese after a meal makes one yearn for some tea. It seems like, since the people of Van have a passionate love for tea, they create yet another reason for themselves to have some more tea. You can refer to Volume I, "Komili Travel Book of Flavors" for more detailed information about Van cheeses.

### **Gevaş Green Beans**

Now, we have arrived in Gevaş, and my friend Tansel Parlak's father's home. Tansel is from Gevaş, but we have met each other in Istanbul. His father Kurdi and his mother Sürreya Hanım still live in Gevaş. Since the first day I have set off for this journey, Tansel has been insisting, "You *must* eat Gevaş green beans. And, you must eat it in *our home*." He had set the bar high. Therefore, we were waiting excitedly at the beautiful table set for us in the garden.

Gevaş green beans is one of the most precious produces of the fertile geography of Anatolia. The dish is prepared in olive oil using onions, and local Gevaş tomatoes. The serving plate is lined with small pieces torn off from the bigger thin flatbread. The cooked green beans are added on top, which in return gets topped with yoghurt. (Do I need to mention how delicious the bread and yoghurt is?) This style is named Green Beans à-la-Sürreya Hanım. We eat with great appetite and joy, and thank the Parlak Family, who has welcomed us into their home.

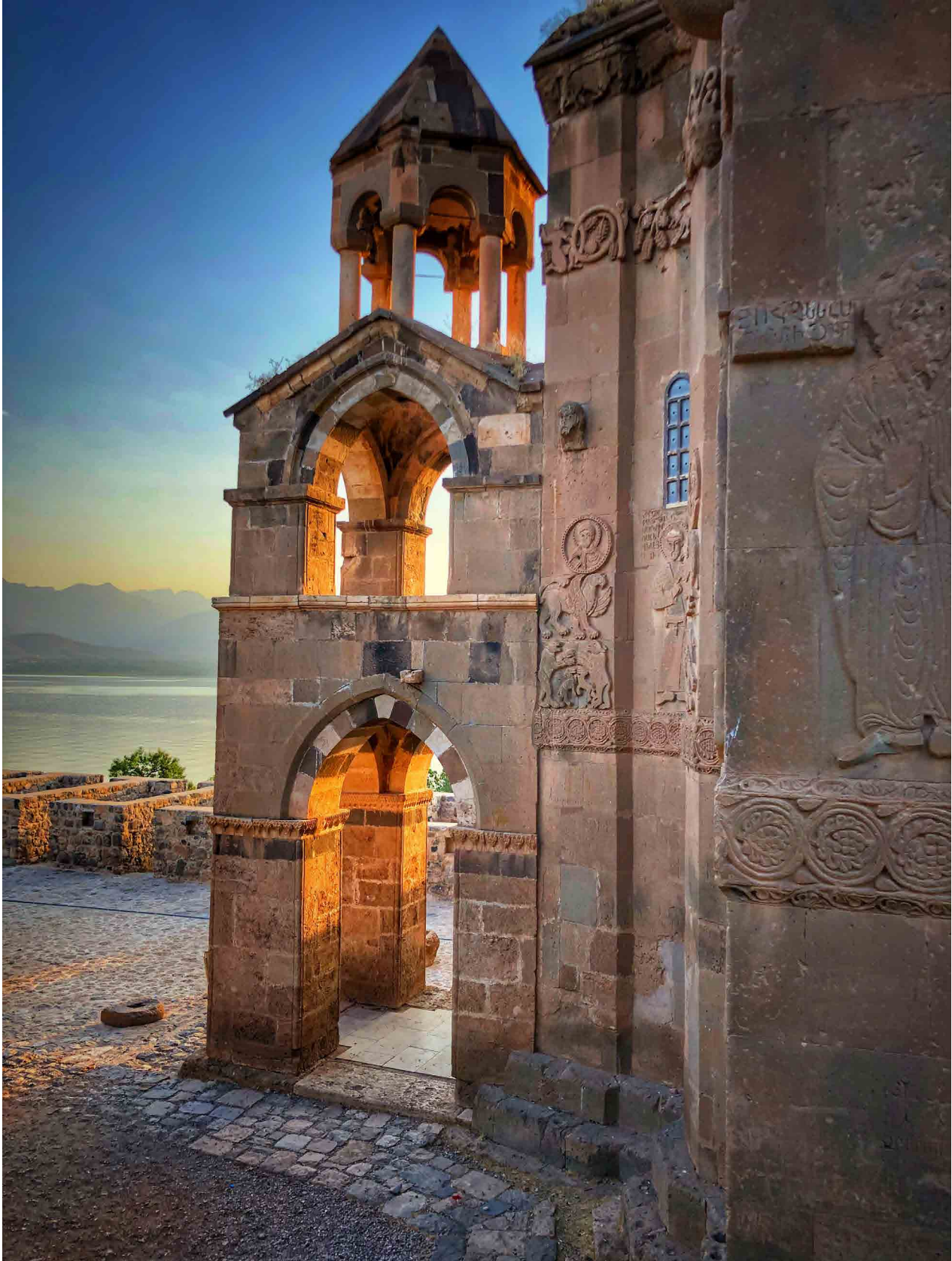


















## Charcoaled Tomato Salad

*5 local tomatoes*

*5 green village peppers*

*1 onion*

*1 lemon*

*Komili Stonemill Olive Oil*

*Black pepper, rock salt*

- Grill the tomatoes and peppers in stone oven, or over charcoal.
- Peel the cooked tomatoes, and smash them with the bottom of a glass.
- Put them in a mixing container.
- Cut some of the peppers into the container.
- Add the juice of lemon, salt, and black pepper; and mix.
- Place on the serving plate; decorate with the remaining pieces of green peppers, and ample amount of olive oil spread on top.

*This salad I have tasted in Hacı Halil's Place in Van is one of the three most delicious items I have eaten during the entire trip. One can definitely go to Van just for this salad!*







# KEMALIYE

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*I am en route to Kemaliye via Elazığ. This is one of the most scenic roads you can drive on in Turkey. But you need to be careful; do not let yourself be distracted with the views while driving, because the breathtaking panorama is there during the entire route. It is so much better to stop the vehicle, go outside and look at it.*

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Eğin, which is nowadays called as Kemaliye, is a district of Erzincan. During the Republican times (since 1923), it had been first annexed to the greater municipality of Malatya, then, to that of Elazığ, and eventually to Erzincan's. However, the people of Eğin do not use the new name of the district. They also still feel themselves to be connected to the Harput (currently a district officially annexed to Elazığ) community.



“Türk Halı Şirketi” (“Turkish Carpet Company”), which happens to be *the very* first registered carpet company in Turkey, and the second overall registered company in the history of the Republic of Turkey, is in Erzincan.

The Apçağa Village mentioned by Ahmet Kutsi Tecer as “There is a village there, afar” in his poem, which was made into a famous song that we all grew up listening to, is also here. There are no prisons here. And their butchers have been very famous since the 16th century, when the title of meat *kethüda*<sup>70</sup> was passed on to the people of Eğin. Besides, this is one of the most scenic districts of Turkey...

### **Breakfast at the Atatürk Cultural Center**

We decide to go to the cafe in the Cultural Center for a good local breakfast. And, I am so glad that we did! I end up with one of the best breakfasts I ever had in the East. The table is not inundated with endless varieties. I do not prefer that kind of breakfasts anyway. What is important for me is a few local and good products, and some extra-virgin olive oil next to them. That is exactly what the Kültür Kafe (Culture Cafe) serves; a humble masterpiece prepared with the regional products. I savored the Kemaliye butter like it was cheese. I could not make my mind on whether the home-made tomato paste was so delicious because of the walnuts or the tomatoes in it. And the icing on the cake was the olive oil, couple different bread types fresh out of an Eğin bakery, and the *tulum*<sup>71</sup> cheese... And then... When we went into the dessert phase, I got carried away with the Eğin honey, and the Eğin dry *kaymak*. Dry kaymak is not a common product one finds in many places in Turkey. It is made and served fresh unlike the regular *kaymak*.

### **Cumhuriyet Restaurant 1974**

This restaurant, which is run by a family of parents and a son, not only is one of the best restaurants in Kemaliye, but also in Turkey. Its *kavurma* and Erzincan *dermason*<sup>72</sup> beans dish is very tasty. The *pilav with kaburga* (ribs), which has *kavurma*, basil, *bulgur*, garlic, tomato paste and onions, and which is cooked over charcoal heat, is nothing less than a legend. The reason why all the dishes are so tasty lies in the high quality of the products they choose, and their insistence on keeping the conventional mastery, and traditionalism. Combine this with the fact that Eğin’s water supply comes direct from a natural spring at an altitude of 1700 meters, and that everything is cooked over charcoal heat, and you get the picture for the underlying reasons for the exquisite local tastes.

### **The Water of Eğin**

Calling the name of Eğin is equivalent to saying water. Strolling through the city, you can come across with running water—fountains and streams—everywhere. Eğin seriously makes one think of water. Two times in my lifetime, I drank very tasty water; and both of the times were in Erzincan. Once in Eğin, and the other time in Ekşisu... I would come back here anytime just to close my eyes and drink that water again.

<sup>70</sup> “*Kethüda*”, often deriving to “*kâhya*” in daily speech, was an Ottoman title meaning “steward, deputy, lieutenant, agent, administrator, or representative” of an organization to the government, or to a wealthy family. Hereby, it is referring to the administrative representative in charge for meat production and distribution for the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>71</sup> “*Tulum*” is the name of a goatskin casing. “*Tulum cheese*” is a traditional goat’s milk cheese matured in a goatskin casing for up to twenty months. This white cheese has a unique flavor ranging from mild and slightly sweet to strong and somewhat bitter. The creamy, rich milk used in making the cheese is only gathered once a year in spring after the birth of kids.

<sup>72</sup> “*Dermason*” beans are large flat white kidney beans grown in Turkey. They are less curved than standard kidney beans. When cooked, Dermason Beans hold their shape, and have a smooth texture.





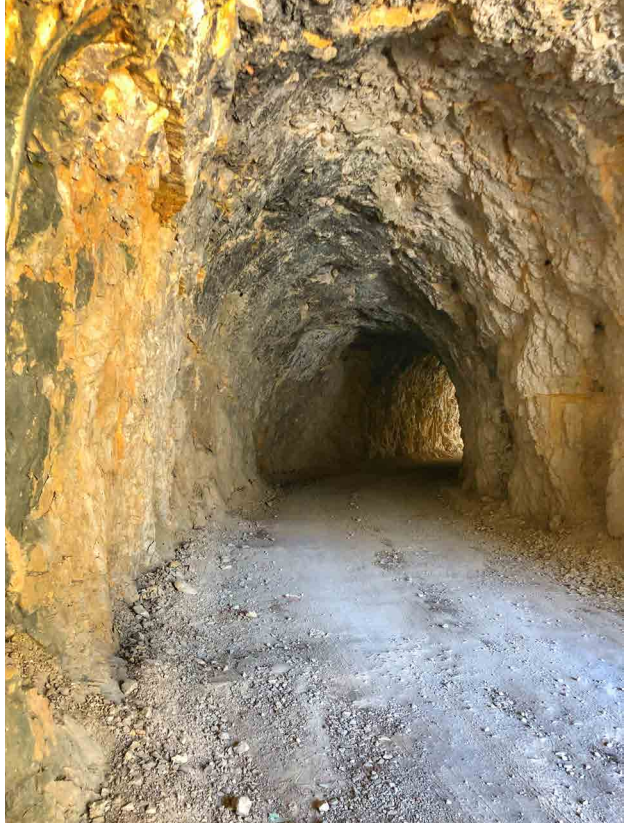














### **Kemaliye Museums**

There are two lovely museums in Kemaliye; a Natural History Museum, and an Ethnography Museum. Both museums are a reflection of how much the people of Kemaliye value their homeland.

The Natural History Museum is full of information, and it houses samples of plants, animals including insects, water creatures, stones, fossils and so much more that grow or exist in Kemaliye. I have not come across with many similar museums elsewhere in Turkey.

The Ethnography Museum, on the other hand, takes you on a long historic journey from Eğin to Kemaliye through its display of gadgets and utensils used in daily life, the measurement tools used by the tradesmen, the documents of the early corporations founded in the region, the documents relating to Harput, which used to be the municipality it was annexed to, the clothes worn by the locals, and the famed door-knockers.

### **Karanlık Kanyon and Taşyolu- The Dark Canyon and Rockroad**

Karanlık Kanyon (The Dark Canyon) is listed as one of the outstanding canyons of the world. I am confident it may be in the top ranks of the list. The canyon, which goes hand in hand with the Karasu Tributary of the Fırat River (Euphrates) extends for nine kilometers. Following the canyon on one side, there is the road built by the inhabitants of Kemaliye. And what a road it is! It took them about one-hundred and forty years to build, carving out the rocks and dirt using nothing but their hands, pickaxes, and shovels...

I find it to be one of the most scenic roads in the world. But also, one of the most dangerous ones... For six and a half kilometers, the road is covered with tunnels, but the remaining open parts come readily with sharp turns, deep cliff edges, and spectacular sceneries.

—

I particularly included Kemaliye in this trip so that I could drive on this difficult road.

One of the best things about the Dark Canyon is the climb starting around the Kemaliye villages all the way up to the peak; Karanlık Tepesi (The Dark Peak). The view from here is inexplicably gorgeous. You become tongue-tied and breathless...







## KEMAH

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*I depart from Kemaliye for Kemah. However, I am not heading for Kemah city-center, but rather for Özdamar Village following the invitation from Nigar and Yavuz Peker into their home in the village. The setting sun and clouds are accompanying me en route to Özdamar Village. The day turns into evening as I drive along the skirts of Mount Munzur passing by spectacular vistas in every direction until I reach the village.*

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Nigar Teyze and Yavuz Amca are the parents of my friends Murat and Ebru. Elif and Faysal, who are my friends from Istanbul, will be joining us in the village. Having such a good excuse, we will be spending a great time altogether in the village.



As soon as I park my car, and step into the garden in the farm, I come across with a splendid table; I mean a Kemah table in its true sense. I sit at the table after saying, “May God bless the hands of Nigar Teyze! May her labor be blessed!”.

### **Babbiko**

First, a wood fire is prepared in the oven. Enough time is allowed for it to go down to ashes. Later, unleavened flour and water are worked out into a dough, which gets spread out as one piece into a broad tray. After the tray is covered with a lid, it gets buried in the ashes. In other words, first the bread for *babbiko* has to be prepared.

Once the bread gets cooked, and taken off the ashes, the top of it is carved out in one piece like a lid, leaving about one-centimeter-thick edges. Once the top is open, the inside of the bread is scooped out. In the meantime, *keş*<sup>73</sup>, which is one of the local cheeses, is soaked in water so that its saltiness loses its strength. The inside of the bread, which had been scooped out earlier, is fried in lots of butter, and mixed with *keş* cheese. After filling this mixture into the bread crust, the bowl-like crust gets closed. With just a few ingredients, I find *babbiko* to be one of the best and most economical dishes of the Anatolian cuisine.

### **Siron**

*Siron* is a dish that has spread out from the Eastern Black Sea Region, but especially from Artvin, into the depths of Anatolia reaching all the way to Bursa in the West, despite all the variations it went through. There are several types and varieties. First you prepare a phyllo dough that you make into a roll. Then, you cut them into two-centimeter strips that you place on a cooking tray, which had been buttered previously. Once they are out of the oven all baked, you pour some meat broth, and cook on the stovetop until the phyllo dough pieces are softened. When the pieces get slightly softened, you take it off the fire, cover them with some yoghurt with garlic, and pour some burnt butter right before serving.

### **Gidik**

*Gidik* is the local name for a kid (baby goat) in this region. The first step is to slow-cook the kid by boiling in a cauldron over low fire heat. The only thing you need to add during the first step is salt and black pepper. Then, you transfer the kid into a large oven tray, and butter it well. After broiling it in low heat to the point when it gets crispy on the outside, it gets served to the table. I will leave it to your imagination; the kind of the interfusion of tastes the kid itself, the Kemah salt, and the Kemah water bring in to the dish.

### **Kemah Köfte**

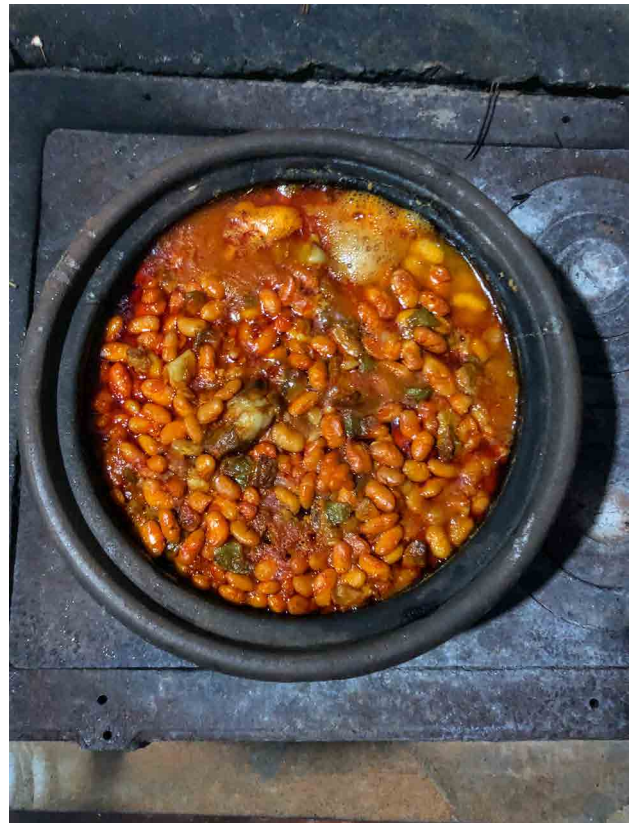
*Kemah köfte* calls for more bread and more eggs. Onions and parsley are mixed with ground meat and they are worked out well. After resting for a while, the ground meat mixture is made into *köftes*. After being soaked and covered consecutively with eggs and flour, they are fried.

<sup>73</sup> “*Keş*” is a hard consistency cheese made with drained and dried yoghurt. It resembles *çökelek* but unlike it, *keş* comes molded and more solid. Lots of salt is used to preserve it for a long time.











### Evelik Wrap

This is an herb indigenous to Anatolia that is commonly known as *evelik*, but alternatively called as *evilik*, *efelek*, *avelek* or *labada*. It comes especially in *kavurma* and *wrap* formats. The Kemah recipe uses olive oil, *bulgur*, lots of mint, lots of parsley, and lots of dill. It is a very tasty and light version... In Anatolia, besides *evelik*, wraps can be made with sour-cherry leaves, mulberry leaves and many other herbs and leaves.

### Hand-cut Kadayıf

First you roll the dough thin. Then, you cook it over *sac*, the convex sheet-metal cooking tray, until they get slightly browned. You repeat the procedure until all the dough is finished, and let the cooked pieces rest aside. Once they are cooler, you shred them fine and mix them well with melted butter. You spread half of this into the cooking tray, cover well with a layer of finely chopped Kemah walnuts, and put another layer of the shredded and buttered dough as the top layer. The key is to bake both sides over *mangal*<sup>74</sup> (brazier) by turning it upside down once one side is cooked. Once you pour the sherbet on it, it is ready to be served.

### Dövmeç

Mulberries and walnuts are pounded in a wooden mortar until they are finely interfused into each other and there are no chunks left. The walnuts have to be from Kemah. Keep in mind that the weather, and the water of Kemah are great, and the altitude is higher. Consequently, the Kemah walnuts have a stronger taste, oiliness, and aroma. The mixture is layered into a large tray, and tightened, making it ready for slicing for serving. Once you get to Kemaliye, some grape molasses are added in to give it a softer consistency, and the name becomes *lök*. Actually, this is how you make *helva*<sup>75</sup>... I say *helva*, because there are recipes such as walnut *helva* or almond *helva* in the Turkish cuisine dating back to Seljuk times, which are prepared by pounding rather than cooking. In other words, these recipes are inherited from way back.

<sup>74</sup> “*Mangal*” is derived from the Arabic word *manqal* meaning “portable”. It originally referred to portable indoors heaters in the form of a metal live-coal container. *Mangals* (braziers) can be used for boiling water, making coffee or tea, or for grilling by open-fire charcoal cooking.

<sup>75</sup> “*Helva*” may refer to any of the following groups of sweets in Turkey.

1. The dessert type made with a starch base, sugar, butter and other ingredients like nuts and flavorings. Another class within this class is the helvas made with flour or semolina with or without milk addition while sautéing.
2. The confectionary type made with sesame nut butter (better known as tahini) and sugar. It is sold in blocks and sliced or cut into cubes to serve. It has a soft, crumbly, slightly crystalline texture. It often has other additions like nuts, dried fruits or cocoa inside.
3. The paste type (as in here) which is usually prepared by pounding or crushing nuts, and a softer ingredient to hold it together.



### **Kemah Salt**

The Kemah salt, which is being mined from a 3000-year-old source, is one of the tastiest salts of Turkey. Naturally, there are no chemical additives in this salt. The salt, which comes from its source molten with water, is transferred from the pools in the cave into the pools outside, where they are crystallized under the heat of the sun. But of course, you need hot weather, and that is why the salt production starts in June, and continues until the end of September. Kemah salt is sought after for its taste, but also as a main commodity for the cheese-makers, the transhumant pastoralists, and the makers of brine or pickles. If you want to improve the flavor of your meals, and use a healthier salt, go for Kemah salt.















Can<sup>76</sup>

## “ERZINCAN”

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*I love visiting Erzincan. Even if I am not staying in Erzincan, I love just passing through it. I have seen it all in Erzincan; the winter, the snow, the bitter cold, and all the other seasons. Erzincan is a city of the East that never stops spellbinding me with its changing sceneries every time I visit.*

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If you are approaching the city from the direction of Sivas, at about twenty kilometers before the city, you start going gradually down the hills with spectacular vistas surrounding you. Make yourself ready for this, and if you are not in a hurry, stop by the road here and there to absorb and enjoy the scenery. I still remember that scene with the full moon I had enjoyed many years ago...

<sup>76</sup> “Can” covers any and all of these meanings: “spirit, life, heart, lifeblood, dear”. Hereby, it may also be serving a reference to the famous folk song about Erzincan that has the same title; “Can Erzincan”, or the expression the inhabitants of the city use while addressing their hometown as a token of their love for their city.



*Erzincan is a city of the East, which has suffered many earthquakes. It has been demolished and rebuilt over and over again, and with all the pain it had to go through, it has become silent, and it has retired into its own shell.*

*Erzincan is a clean, clear, and pure city of Anatolia; just like the waters running abundantly in all of its corners...*

This time we go around in Erzincan with Faysal, whom we brought with us from Kemah. He is a typical man of Erzincan to the bone.

#### **Köfteci Sefa - Sefa, the Köfte Cook**

He keeps an old Erzincan tradition alive; he prepares the *köftes* on a skewer, and serves them in an Erzincan *lavaş* after cooking them. When you sit down at the table, first you get served some sliced onions, parsley and tomatoes. Then follows the spices, and the charcoaled vegetables next to them. As a pass time activity while you are waiting for your *köftes* to be cooked, you start customizing your own salad with all that is on the table. Not only its *ayran*, but its *köftes* and salads as well are quite delicious.

#### **Erzincan Kesmecesi**

*Kesmece* is quite famous in Erzincan. In fact, drinking tea out of the *semaver*<sup>77</sup> is as famous, too. Now, you may say, “What does that have to do with it?”, but, the two have a very close relation. Just as in all the cities of the East, tea is not served only with white sugar cubes (in some cities the cubes may not be served at all), but also with dried fruits, nuts, different *leblebi* (roasted chickpeas) kinds, *lokums*<sup>78</sup> (Turkish Delight) and Erzincan *kesmeces*. *Kesmeces* are sweets made mainly with fruits, which serve as a substitute for sugar. It is very similar to *pestil*. There are numerous different types like sour-cherry, apricots, peaches, or apples. You can buy it from any confectionary store or herbalist store as you stroll through the Erzincan market. Even if you do not drink tea, you can enjoy the taste as you keep discovering.

#### **Leblebici Rahmi**

The name tells it all; Rahmi Amca’s *leblebi* (roasted chickpeas) is famous. But the dried apricots coming from his store are famed as much as the *leblebi*. We stop by his store creating an excuse for ourselves; a tea break. He serves us *leblebi*, dried apricots, and all kinds of delicious nuts.

#### **Tulum Cheese**

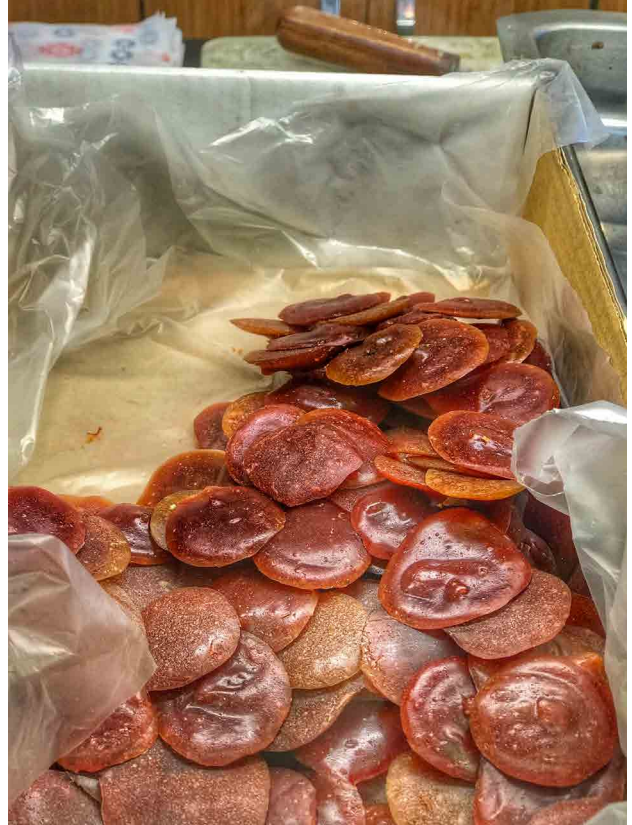
I swear, you cannot eat anything close to the *tulum* cheese you eat in Erzincan anywhere else in the world! To bring back some with you back to home, or to have it shipped is never the same thing as it is with tasting in Erzincan. I tried this many times. I brought the same cheese I had eaten in Erzincan with me to home, but no; it did not work! It just did not taste the same. I want to put an end to this subject by saying, “*Tulum* cheese got to be eaten in Erzincan.” or “The tastiest *tulum* cheese anywhere is the one consumed in where it is made.” You can buy your *tulum* at Pala Market in Erzincan. In fact, I suggest that you buy some butter, too. Then, all you have to do is to buy a warm *tandır* bread from the bakery. You can enjoy the most delicious cheese and bread of the world right there in front of the bakery.

<sup>77</sup> “*Semaver*” derives from the Russian word “samovar”; literally “self-brewer”. It is a metal container traditionally used to heat and boil water with the purpose of making tea. Traditionally, it is heated with charcoal, but many newer *semavers* use electricity.

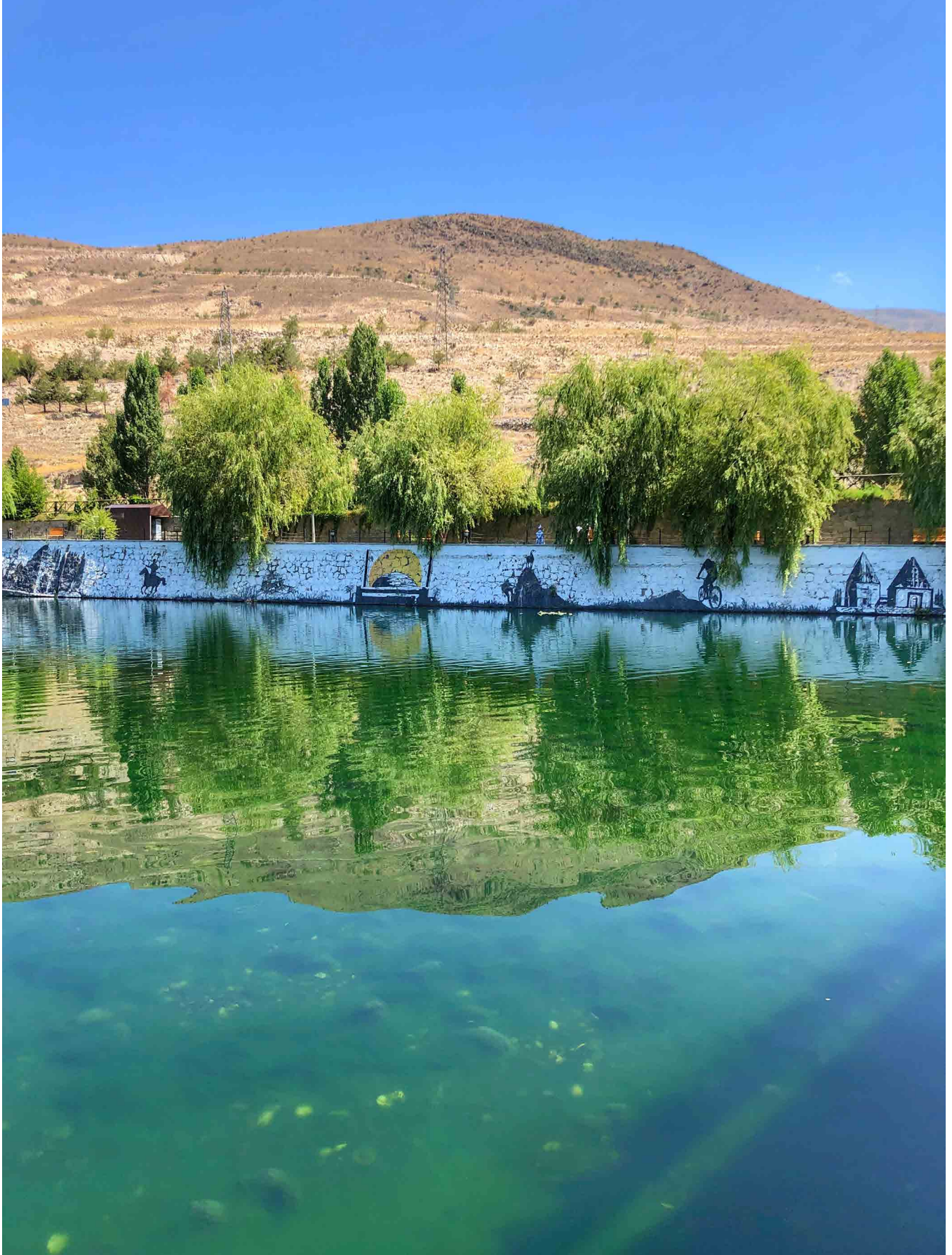
In many households, the tea is prepared using two pots: one for brewing the tea, and one for hot water. In restaurants, or in public places, where a lot of tea is consumed, the tea is prepared using a *semaver*. With a *semaver* the tea is brewed in the pot or kettle on the top of the *semaver*, while the water is kept at boiling point in the lower part. The tea coming from the pot on the top of the *semaver* is then mixed or diluted with the boiling water. If you prefer your tea lighter or weaker, more water is added.

<sup>78</sup> “*Lokum* (Turkish Delight)” is a jellylike or gummy confection usually cut in cubes, and dusted with powdered sugar. Starch and sugar (honey in older days) are the main ingredients in the plain kind, but many varieties contain all kinds of nuts, fruits, and flowers as flavoring agents. It was invented more than 200 years ago by the royal confectioner to the Ottoman sultan.











### **Ekşi Su - Tart Water**

I had already mentioned in the Kemaliye section, but let me reiterate: I drank some of the tastiest waters of my life in Erzincan. I would come to Erzincan just for its water, let alone its meat, bread, and tea. *Ekşi su* (Tart water) has a distinctive aroma, and it is somewhat hard, but it can become addictive for water and mineral water enthusiasts. I have not come to understand why Erzincan’s *ekşi su* is not known well in Turkey, or in the world. It deserves to be a brand. In his most famous historic Book of Travels, Evliya Çelebi says, “What you call as Bursa is nothing but water.”, but he could have reconsidered that after coming to Erzincan.

### **Erzincan Döner**

It is clear and loud that Erzincan’s *döner* is pretty delicious, but the *lavaş* and *tandır* breads are key factors in making it so delicious. Nowhere else in Turkey, *döner* is served with such good *tandır* bread. In fact, I know that some of the Erzincan *döner* shops in the big cities are still ordering their breads from Erzincan. I am sharing two of the names here with you;

*Evin Döner*

*Mazlum Konak*

### **Cimin Grape**

Cimin Grape is the only patented native grape variety in Turkey, and it is indigenous to Erzincan. It is a table grape with seeded, black-skinned berries. Its scent and taste are very aromatic. We visited the vineyard of Vasfi Kargı Amca. I suggest that you take into consideration the time of travel when you are planning your trip to Erzincan, because the *Cimin grapes* find their true character and taste in the months of August and September.

### **Girlevik Waterfalls**

This waterfall is on the top of the list for Turkey’s natural beauties. The area around it is used as a picnic area by the inhabitants of Erzincan. It is an Erzincan custom to eat—especially chicken—by the waterfalls located on the Eastern skirts of Mount Munzur.



### **Erzincan Domates Ekşilisi - Erzincan Unripened Tart Tomatoes Dish**

Faysal and I go to Münevver Teyze's garden in the Yaylabası Village of Erzincan. We will be preparing one of the famous and tasty Erzincan dishes altogether; the tomato *ekşilisi*. First, we make our fire in the garden, and place our casserole on it. Then, we sauté some *kavurma* and onions in butter. The smells are already captivating us... We cut green and red peppers, and Erzincan's unripened tart tomatoes. All of it goes into the casserole. We sprinkle a small amount of *bulgur* on top, and let it cook.

If the tomatoes are not tart enough, we add in *tamah plums (can erik)*<sup>79</sup> to create the tartness we like in the meal. We add some chopped parsley and dill, and let it all rest. Finally, we break the *tandır* bread into smaller pieces using our hands, and make a base layer in a large tray. We turn the casserole upside down on the bread layer, and devour with great appetite.

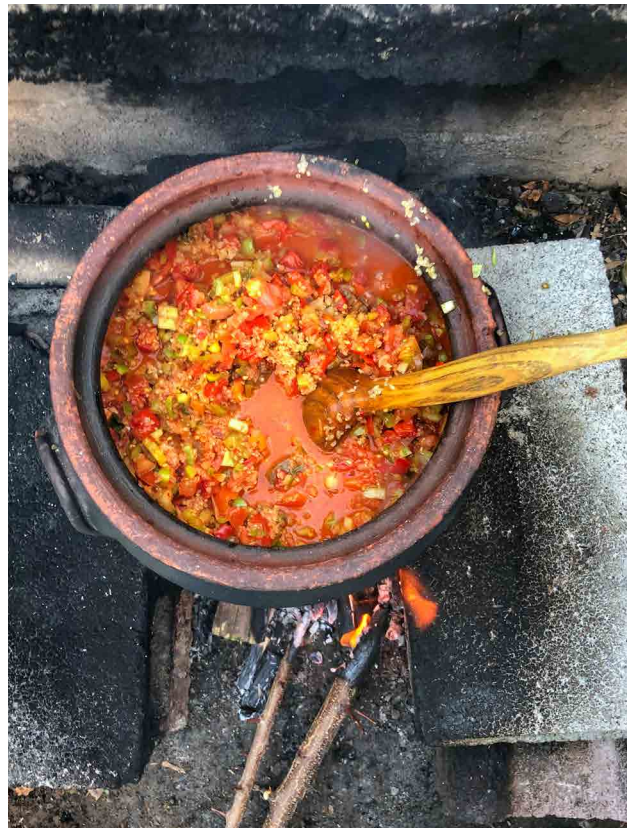
*“Al yağlık yeşil yağlık*

*Münevver teyzenin eline sağlık”*<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> “*Can erik*” or “can plums” are in the greengage family of plums. They are shiny, vibrant green, and smooth and hard to the touch. They feel unripe, and have a crisp crunch, and tart flavor.

<sup>80</sup> These are two little rhyming lines in Turkish used in the area. The second line has been altered by the author to thank the lady of the house. It translates as: “Red handkerchief, green handkerchief, May God bless, Münevver Teyze's hands!”











# GÖBEKLİTEPE

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*Speaking of Göbeklitepe,  
it would be unfair not to mention Klaus Schmidt.*

*In precious memory of him...*

*1 single grain of wheat + 13.000 years = 34.997.000  
years on Earth*

*That is how simple the calculation is!*

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As you may have already guessed, the reason for the story of the last 13.000 years—which encompasses a beginning with hunter-gatherers, covering the forging of iron, the inventions of gunpowder, print, and steam engine, and reaching the space at the end—to speed up so much is a single grain of wheat.



*This country has the most abundant and precious lands of the world from where civilization, culture, and the story of food has spread out to the world.*

*And Göbeklitepe is the capital of these lands.*

IZA—one the oldest grains of the world—is crucially influential on the transformation of life from the point of hunter-gatherers to sedentary life style, and to the developments in science, arts and culture, as part of life on Earth that has been going on who knows for how many million years.

This country has the most abundant and precious lands of the world from where civilization, culture, and the story of food has spread out to the world. And Göbeklitepe is the capital of these lands.

Göbeklitepe is said to be the center of life, and a temple for the people of its era. Its current location is at the end of a valley. There used to be animal traps in this valley. The animals that were hunted in here used to be sacrificed to the gods at the temple. Göbeklitepe also stands as the sole proof of a place where humans had their eating, drinking and worshipping activities all in one place.

#### **So, what did they eat back then?**

It is not accurate to mention absolute things about this matter. However, one can make an educated guess that wheat, baked wheat, and wheat mash were staple food items.

Meat eating rituals inherited from the hunting periods are also in the list of meals. They cook their meat over open-fire. They believe that the smoke of the fire will make the God envy, and come down to join the meal. Other food items for the period include game meat, smoked animal meat made by putting meadows on fire at night time, salt soup, barley, beans, sweet peas, pistachios, almonds, and grapes.











**Now, let us have a look at the current Urfa cuisine.**

### **Urfa Butter-ghee**

Butter-ghee is basically the pure state of butter after an extra distillation. It can be made in many parts of the world, but certain technical conditions have to be met for the best kind to be created. Besides the climate, the fauna, the type of animal (*üveysi/hellik* sheep<sup>81</sup>), the technique used in making also has to be similar to that of Urfa's.

After the *hellik* sheep is milked, the milk is fermented into yoghurt. It is then churned into butter in a wooden or leather butter churn. Some water is added in before placing over open-fire. It is important that the cooking container is not touching the fire. As this continues over low fire, the foam appearing on the surface of the *ayran* is kept on being separated. The residue eventually gets put into *tuluks*<sup>82</sup>. However, before that, the *tuluks* are coated inside with grape molasses or honey. This not only affects the aroma but also blocks its contact with air.

The butter-ghee of Urfa differentiates in one point from the rest of the butter-ghee made in the East. In the general practice, butter is rested after its production, and the clearing process is carried out only then. To the contrary, in Urfa, the *fresh* butter is converted to butter-ghee at the time it is first produced. Since resting gives more acidity to the butter, the Urfa butter-ghee has a more purified and clean taste to it.

### **Urfa Home Kitchen**

Speaking of Urfa, we all think of liver, eggplant kebab, *çiğ köfte*<sup>83</sup> and *lahmacun*. But, what is cooked in the homes in Urfa? If I were to describe the answer in detail, I believe we would have to dedicate the rest of the book only to this subject. That is why I will refrain myself by only giving a couple examples, and making a simple introduction at this time.

### **Ağzı Açık - Ağzı Yumuk / Mouth Open - Mouth Shut**

Some unleavened dough is prepared. It is kneaded with fat-free ground meat, garlic, and salt. It is made into balls that would fit onto one's palms. Holes are indented into the balls, which then gets filled with meat, and fried in butter. If you prefer a more fatty filling, you can alternatively prepare it with a mixture of fatty ground meat (lamb), onions, parsley, peppers, and walnuts. But, this time you will have to seal the balls after filling before frying them.

### **Dolmalı Köfte (fıstıklı cevizli) - Stuffed balls with pistachios and walnuts**

You can find numerous kinds of *içli köfte* in Urfa. The recipe changes depending on the financial status of the home. Some will cook it with potatoes added to the shell (the ball) while some others will use *çiğ köfte* quality, non-fat, double or triple ground meat specially prepared by butchers for making *çiğ köfte*... Some will use nothing but walnuts for the filling, while others will use lots of pistachios and walnuts. The latter kind is always an indication of the family's higher level economic condition. Regardless of the kind, it is always served after being boiled in water.

<sup>81</sup> “*Uveysi*, *ivesi* or *awassi*” are alternative names for a sheep breed. It is a fat-tailed type fit for hot climates and desert conditions. They come in multi colors. The ears are long and drooping. “*Hellik*” is a local name for the same kind of sheep.

<sup>82</sup> “*Tuluk*” is an alternative traditional name for tulum; a goatskin (or sometimes another type of animal) casing.

<sup>83</sup> “*Çiğ köfte*” translates into “raw meatball”. Traditionally, the main ingredients are bulgur, finely ground raw meat (mostly lamb), tomato and pepper paste, herbs and lots of spices. The key is to ‘cook’ the raw meat by kneading with hot spicy powdered or flaked red pepper (or isot in certain regions like Urfa). Lately, especially in restaurants, vegan kinds are also served.



### **Lıklık Köfte (içi iç yağlı) - Lıklık Köfte (with the addition of tallow in the filling)**

This is another type of *içli köfte*. The filling is made with tallow, walnuts, dried mint, and *isot*. Its name derives from the “lık lık lık” sound one hears when the tallow inside the filling starts melting. If you eat the *köfte* biting directly while still warm out of the pot, the melting fat will be trickling down on the sides of your mouth. If you cut the *köfte* in your plate using a fork or knife, the best bit will remain on the plate. Avoid this! In order to eat it using the right method to get the best flavor, you need to hold the *köfte* with the fingers of both hands, and cut into two halves. While bringing one half closer to the mouth, you need to keep it at a certain perpendicular angle so that the fat does not overflow before it is in the mouth.

### **Kulaklı İncikli Yoğurt Çorbası - Yoghurt Soup with Ears<sup>84</sup> and Lamb Shank**

The lamb shanks are boiled over a long period of time. Then, they are deboned, and the meat is shredded. While the lamb shanks are cooking, a dough is prepared with flour, water and salt. The dough is cut into smaller pieces, and made into ears. The ears are fried. A soup mix is prepared by mixing some yoghurt into the broth. The fried ears, and the shredded lamb shanks are added in the soup. Some dried mint leaves are mixed into melting butter-ghee, and this is poured on the soup in a decorative way.

### **Üzlemeli Pilav - Pilav with a Face**

According to the traditions of Urfa, families that have members, who have returned from Hadj <sup>85</sup>, offer *Üzlemeli pilav* as a treat to guests. A plain *pilav* is prepared using Karacadağ rice, or any other native rice variety. As the *pilav* is resting, some butter-ghee is poured in it to complete its aroma. In the meantime, some boiled and peeled chickpeas are soaked in hot water to rest. After the chickpeas are drained, they are turned in one spoon of butter together with de-shelled, peeled, and unsalted Antep pistachios. After pouring some grape molasses on top, the *üzleme* is ready. The *üzleme*<sup>86</sup> is placed on the *pilav* in a serving plate, and served to the guests.

### **Müftahi Tas Kebabı - Müftahi Family's Bowl Kebab**

Each household in Urfa has a characteristic dish unique in style. In fact, it is more accurate to say, each household has its own unique interpretation, which gets to be named after the last name of the family. One such famous family dish in Urfa is the *tas (bowl) kebab* of the Müftahi Family. There is a special copper pot designated for this dish with a bowl in the center. The meat is cooked under the bowl for about three hours in this pot. Right before the cooking is completed, onions, parsley, and pomegranate sour (pomegranate molasses) are added in the area around the bowl. The bowl in the center is taken off right before serving.

### **Urfa Peynirli Urfa Katmeri - Urfa Katmer with Urfa Cheese**

May them live long! The Urfa people... How did they keep this recipe in hiding all this time? We felt so sorry for not having tasted it until today. Fifteen to twenty layers of baklava-quality phyllo dough are stacked on top of each other, after each layer is buttered with butter-ghee. Right in the middle of this process, some Urfa cheese is added on the layer. It gets baked in a stone oven. Once the top layer goes brown, it is removed from the oven, and some sherbet is poured over. After it cools down, it gets ready to be served.

<sup>84</sup> “*Kulak*” literally translates into “ear”; and “*Kulaklı*” into “with ears”. When making dishes prepared with dough, if the dough is cut into circles, folded in two, and sealed on the sides; thus, looking like ears, the word “ears” is used for the dough, defining the shape and method. Sometimes squares will work, too. Although the ears will be triangular ears. :)

<sup>85</sup> “*Hac*, Hadj or Hajj” is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest city for Muslims. It is a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime.

<sup>86</sup> “*Üzleme*” derives from “*yüzleme*” which literally translates into “putting a face”. In Urfa, *üzleme* is the mixture prepared with rasins, chickpeas, molasses, butter-ghee, rice and salt in the traditional recipe. There are different ways of making it just as in the recipe here.











## What does an ordinary Urfa breakfast consist of?

### Eggs with Pepper Jam

Pepper jam is Urfa's pepper paste. In other words, in Urfa people categorize the pepper paste as a jam in the confectionary class. The pepper paste gets turned in butter-ghee; eggs are added in; and all is savored with flat bread. It is one of my favorite Urfa breakfast items. I would like to especially emphasize that butter-ghee best manifests itself in eggs. In order to get its true aroma, smell, and taste, I suggest that you try it with plain eggs.

### Ağız Sütü - Colostrum

*Ağız sütü* (colostrum) is the first milk from a sheep that has given birth. The milk is used for feeding the lamb first. If there is any left, that is served at breakfast.

### Sheep Yoghurt

Sheep milk is boiled, and let aside for cooling. When it cools down to the level where your pinky finger does not burn when you put it in the milk, you ferment it with *şırdan mayası* (abomasum ferment)<sup>87</sup> First, it remains resting in room temperature for four hours, then, in the refrigerator for two days. The yoghurt is now ready to be served at breakfast. The *kaymak* (skin) on top of the yoghurt is deemed special, and it is especially served to the most valued guests.

### Grape Molasses

Towards the end of summer, the grapes, which are crushed and drained under the scorching heat of Urfa, are filled into broad copper basins, and fermented with white clay. Then, this molasses is laid on the flat roof of the house to cook under the last hot sun of the summer. The temperature does not exceed 60 degrees Centigrade while the molasses are boiled. Its color does not get blackened; it does not taste burnt; and the appearance remains clear. After fifteen days, it is poured into clay earthenware urns and glass jars to be stored for breakfast time.

### Traditional Wheat Breads

Although it is quite seldom nowadays, you can still come across with *kızılca* (type of einkorn)—one of the ancient Hittite wheat grains—and IZA, which is one of the oldest grains. IZA is the local type of *kavılca wheat* (Emmer or *Triticum dicoccum*) found in Urfa. Breads that are made with either of these two flours are leavened in the evening, a day before cooking. The dough is rolled into either *yufka* or *bazlama*<sup>88</sup> shape, and baked over *sac* (convex cooking metal sheet) placed over brushwood fire.

### Katmer

Some dough is prepared using one of the two traditional wheat flours. It is rolled, and filled with no-salt Urfa cheese in between layers. Some molasses, honey or sugar is added. It is cooked on a *sac*. Katmer is very filling, and can be served as breakfast all by itself next to some tea.

<sup>87</sup>“*Şırdan mayası* (abomasum ferment)” is extracted from a kid (calf) which has been fed with nothing but milk. Abomasum, also known as the maw, rennet-bag, or reed tripe, is the fourth and final stomach compartment in ruminants. It secretes rennet, which is used in cheese creation.

<sup>88</sup> Both “*yufka*” and “*bazlama*” are round flat bread types. *Yufka* is very thin (but thicker than phyllo dough) and larger (average 45 cms). *Bazlama* is usually thicker (average 1-2 cms) and smaller (average 10-25 cms).



### **Mıkla - Eggs with Yoghurt**

Crack the eggs, and dispense into the olive oil in a small pan. After it is cooked, drizzle some yoghurt with garlic on top and serve. You can find a very similar *mıkla* recipe in my book, “Komili Ramazan Lezzetleri” (“Komili Ramadan Flavors”).

### **Dried Pepper Sauté**

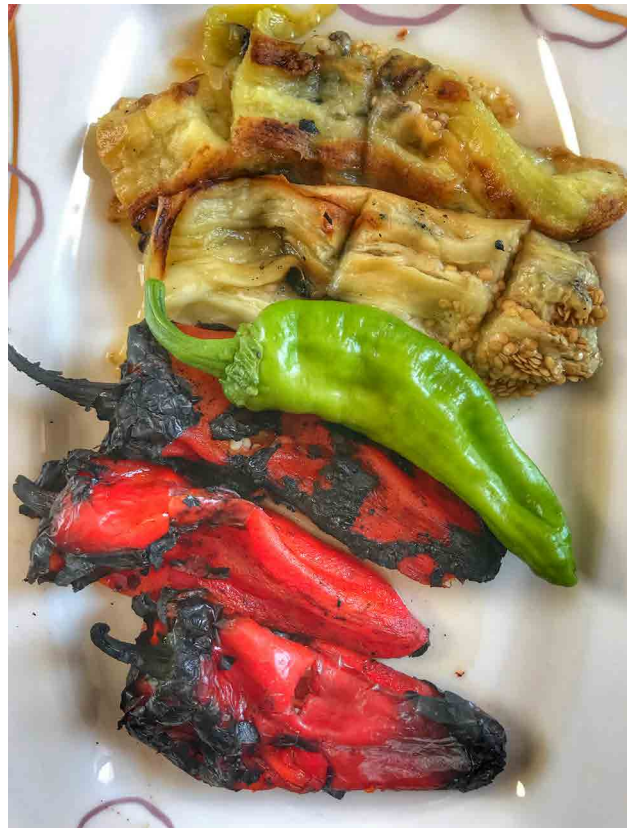
There are numerous kinds of it. You know, people in Urfa love spicy hot. In order to secure continuous supply in winter times, every household dries lots of hot red peppers in summer. They are boiled for a few minutes, and drained before each use. How you eat is up to you! There are so many ways:

Simply by sautéing in oil, by sautéing with onions in oil, by dry-frying with the addition of *isot* and pepper jam, by boiling some dried eggplants and sautéing them together with the peppers, by adding some yoghurt after sautéing them, by filling it together with lots of green vegetables inside a wrap, and in many other ways I cannot finish counting here.

### **And the others...**

A book can be written dedicated to only the breakfast items in Urfa. *Kaymak*, *yayık*, butter, cheese, jams with molasses, egg wrap, chickpeas *tava*, vegetable sauté with tail fat, vegetables charcoaled in oven, tomato or pepper paste with mint spread on bread, and all the others...

We cannot thank enough to the Badıllı Family, who has acquainted us with Urfa, and made us love it. Especially Muhammed Badıllı is an exemplary patriot through his efforts for the protection of the culture, the past, and the local seeds, grains, and dishes. May he live long! And in good health!















## Dried Pepper Sauté

*15 isot peppers (red peppers) dried under the Urfa sun*

*4 hot green peppers*

*1 onion*

*1 table spoon isot (dried and flaked dark red peppers)*

*1 table spoon pepper paste*

*Komili Extra-Virgin Olive Oil*

*Rock Salt*

- Put the dried peppers in a bowl and cover them with hot water. Wait for 10 minutes.
- Drain them, and cut into big pieces together with the green peppers.
- Chop the onion into big pieces.
- Pour some olive oil into the frying pan. First, stir-fry the onions. Then, add the peppers and keep stir-frying.
- A few minutes later, add the paste and *isot*.
- Check the saltiness of the meal. The paste maybe very salty already. Add salt as desired.
- After sautéing for a few more minutes, serve with some *lavaş* bread as a dish to be shared in the middle of the table.







# MİDYAT, DERİK, KIZILTEPE, NUSAYBİN

You can find a detailed guide for culinary experiences in Mardin in Volume II, “Komili Travel Book of Flavors”. Just like any other city in Anatolia, Mardin cannot be possibly fitting into books, let alone one chapter. Consequently, here, in “Komili Travel Book of Flavors”, Volume III, we will be skipping Mardin central, and telling about the indescribable flavors in its surrounding districts.



## **KIZILTEPE**

Kızıltepe is the last district of Mardin you pass through before arriving into central Mardin. So, if you are heading for Mardin, you will be passing through Kızıltepe anyway. But, Kızıltepe can be considered as a destination for culinary experiences all by itself.

### **Ciğerci Fuat - Fuat, the Liver Cook**

A typical Eastern liver cook... They have liver, meat dishes, and great salads. Since we arrived before noon, it falls into breakfast time. We get some Derik olives, bread from the market bakery and *yoghurt kaymak*... After ordering some strong tea, we sit at the table. It is plain and simple, but works as a masterpiece! Small in quantity, but big in worth! Following breakfast, we come to the heart of the matter: liver! We devour that together, and continue with our tour.

### **Yörem Restaurant**

This is one of the top addresses for Mardin dishes. We find “*teşt*”, which we had been in pursuit of, here. *Teşt* gets prepared following the morning prayers, and comes fresh out of the oven around noon. Lamb shank and rib meat are cooked in their own fat, with seasonal large-cut vegetables, in a closed copper basin, otherwise called as *teşt*, at one corner of the oven away from the fire. Thus, the name of the dish... Keep in mind; you can also savor one the most delicious *döners* of the region at Yörem.

### **Sevenler Restaurant**

Sevenler Restaurant is in the Mardin Industrial Zone in Kızıltepe. Industrial zones almost always work as an important reference point, where one would find a good restaurant. They make both Mardin dishes and grills. It is especially famed for its *haşlama* (lamb meat and vegetables boiled in broth), and not only in Mardin but in the entire region. However, the sheep yoghurt’s reputation catches up with the *haşlama*. I am not sure whether it was because we tasted it in the right season, but in any case, it was to die for. I remember gulping down both dishes without taking a breath. I am so glad I did! I can still remember the taste on my palate even when I am writing about it now. *Bulgur pilav*, *haşlama*, Mardin kebab with garlic, and boned lamb meat are top of the line. It makes it worthwhile to visit Mardin all by itself.

### **Yağlı Ekmek – Buttered Bread**

Any bakery will have it. The dough is kneaded with butter, and made into the shape of a plain pide. After scoring several times on the top, it gets baked in a wood-burning stone oven. Somewhat like mille feuille...







### **Hacı Baba Teş Bakery**

Hacı Baba is a bakery, but they also make *teş*. If you go in the morning, you can savor some. Nothing is left after noon. If you prefer, you can pre-order over the phone, and pick it when it is ready to enjoy wherever you like.

### **DERİK**

#### **Derik Tavası**

If you do not find this dish in one of the restaurants in Derik, you can have any of the bakeries or butchers prepare it for you. Mükremin Usta is someone everyone mentions... So, we visit him to get the recipe.

Derik tava, which is prepared with lamb chops or rib meat, has two kinds; plain and with tomatoes. In the plain recipe, a layer of hot peppers are lined under the meat. The second recipe with lots of vegetables has tomatoes, red peppers, green peppers, onions and garlic. The bakery attendant mixes them well a couple times while it is in the oven. It gets served to the table in the tray it was cooked so that all the juices can be mopped with bread. Since it is prepared with both large and boned chunks of meat, it gets its top place on my palate as one of the best tavas I have tried in the region.

#### **Olive and Olive Oil**

Two of Mardin's products with traditional characteristics are Derik olives and the olive oil extracted from that. The olives and olive oil from especially Gaziantep, Nizip, Kilis and Hatay are quite intense with a dominant aroma. Derik olive oil has those regional characteristics, too. I highly recommend you to buy some *bulgur* before leaving Mardin so that you can cook a *pilav* with olive oil when you are back at home.

#### **Çelik Market “Yoğurtçu” - Çelik's Grocery Store aka “The Yoghurt Seller”**

This is one of the most interesting grocery stores I have seen in Turkey. I am calling it a grocery store but it is not your ordinary grocery store. It is more like a yoghurt shop, because the entire place is filled from the ground to the ceiling with yoghurt and dairy products, and a few other items scattered here and there. Its owner Abdulkadir Çelik is also dealing with animal husbandry, a profession he has inherited from his grandfather. The sheep and cow yoghurt, and the *kaymak* he sells in his store comes from his own production facilities in his village. He welcomes us so well, and offers us so much that we feel embarrassed. However, we decide to taste the yoghurt with *kaymak* in the copper pan.



## NUSAYBİN

### Aydınlar Tesisleri-Aydınlar Facility

This road-side facility between Nusaybin and Cizre has a restaurant, where the truck and long vehicle drivers stop and eat. As you may already know, whether or not the truck drivers stop at a restaurant serves as a reference point for the evaluation of a restaurant. If they are eating there, it means it is a good restaurant. The restaurant, which is open 24 hours, serves *tandır*, *haşlama*, *döner*, *sac tava* and stews. Take a little break here if you are passing by.

### Yahya Usta

It is located right across from Aydınlar. It is not only preferred by the inhabitants of Nusaybin, but also by the visitors from Iraq. Their grilled meat dishes and salad are the talk of town around here... If you have time to stop at only one place while passing by here, you will have real difficulty in making a choice.

### Beyaz Su Tesisi - White Water Facilities

Mardin's geographical features are really beautiful, but forested areas are so scarce in this region. Beyaz Su Tesisi is such a valuable part since it is not only located by the water but also under a canopy of trees. Its name comes from the spring that passes through. The specialty dish is the fish that is caught fresh from the spring. The *semaver tea* served after lunch makes the place unforgettable for us.









## MİDYAT

### Midyat

It is just like a film set here... Midyat seems to have preserved its uniqueness, its old houses, and streets quite well. You find yourself in a fairytale in the East, and feel to the bone that you are really in Mardin. Midyat takes the top place in the bucket list for Mardin, because not only it has many visible beauties, but also many restaurants to put a spell on your taste buds.

### Dostlar Haşlama

When I announce that I am on my way to Midyat, and especially when I say, “I will be there in the morning,” everyone tells me like a choir, “Make sure you eat *haşlama* at Dostlar Restaurant.” That is what I did, and I say, “Start the day here when in Midyat.”

### Çağdaş Meat Restaurant

I consider it as one of the best meat specialty restaurants of Turkey. Besides, I can say without hesitation, “It was the best restaurant among all I had visited in 2018.” Besides the local Mardin dishes, the plain ribs baked in the oven are extremely, I mean finger-licking delicious. Inhabitants of Eastern or Southeastern Anatolia can easily make a trip to Midyat just to eat here.

### Kafro Village Pizza House

I would not have imagined that I would be writing a review about a pizza house in Mardin, especially in one of its villages—Kafro—even if I had completed hundred volumes of a book of travels! I think it provides an opportunity to have an interesting experience for the locals. But, the tourists who get curious, do not leave the place empty anyway. Their pizzas, which are prepared with their signature sauce, and baked in a wood-burning oven, are definitely worth a try.













# CİZRE

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*Go to Cizre. Visit Ulu Cami (the Grand Mosque),  
the wholesale vegetable market, and the bakery in the  
wholesale vegetable market.*

*Feel its hot temperature. Sleep on the border,  
and have some strong tea.*

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Cizre is located by the Kasrik Mountain-Pass between Mount Gabar and Mount Cudi. Dicle Nehri (River Tigris) passes through Cizre. It is one of the most dramatic places in the East, which I had been really curious about. My first visit fell on an extremely hot summer day at the end of July. When I got off from the car and laid foot on the ground, I thought I had stepped on fire, and that my pants had caught fire. The temperature in Cizre on that specific day was above 50 degrees Centigrade.



*I believe that scorching  
summer heat was necessary  
for me to feel Cizre.  
My hotel, where I spent the  
night, was by River Tigris.  
And across from the river  
was the Syrian border...  
I believe that half-sleep was  
also required in order to  
fully grasp Cizre.*

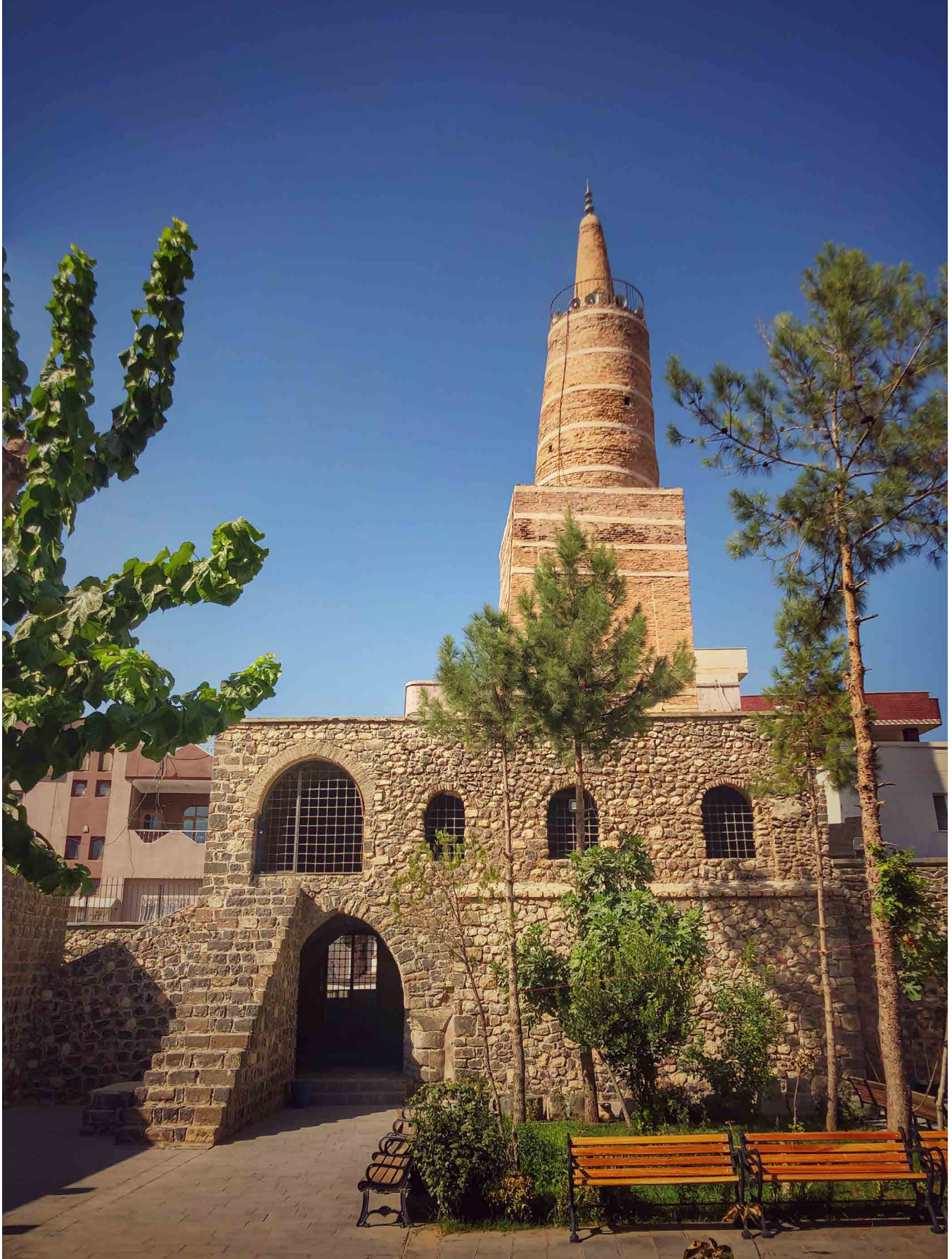
### **Cizre Ulu Cami - The Grand Mosque**

The Grand Mosque of Cizre, and its door-knocker is like Cizre's stamp... The Grand Mosque of Cizre, which is always remembered with its double-dragon door-knocker that was made by the Islamic inventor El-Cezeri, was converted from a church to a mosque in the 7th century. It was restored during the Abbasid period. Atabeg Kasım Mahmud Sencer Shah, who was a governor from the Zengid Dynasty—a Turkic state—ordered it to be rebuilt in 1160s. Its minaret topped with the conical cap was completed in 1155. After one of the door-knockers was stolen, and smuggled out of the country in 1969, ending up eventually in Denmark, for its protection, the original door (and the remaining door-knocker on it) was transferred to the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul.

### **Kasrik Mountain-Pass**

This is a ravishing natural beauty, which divides the legendary Mount Cudi and Mount Gabar; which leads you to Şırnak; where there are tens of caves next to the cemetery of tyrannical Beko located in the Tomb of Mem-U Zin; and where one can escape from the heat of the summer while swimming in the cool waters of the spring that flows through the pass... After leaving Cizre for Şırnak, I suggest that you tune into the folk song “*Değme Felek*”<sup>89</sup> before going through the pass en route, listening to it couple of times.

<sup>89</sup> “*Değme Felek*” (“Leave Me Alone Fate!”) is a sad folksong based on a true love story.









### **Sinan Restaurant**

Sinan Usta is from Cizre. He is 72 years old, and still working... His restaurant is also in Cizre... He is now among the people in Turkey, whose story has most touched my heart. He told me that he had no schooling at all, but he had learned how to read and write on his own. His father, who had been a butcher, puts him as an apprentice in a restaurant at the age of seven. The chef of the restaurant thinks he was too little to carry out physical work in a restaurant. But, nevertheless, he gives him a job; handing a towel to him, he says, “You will just keep the flies away using this.” And that is how his career begins...

He has been coming to work for the last sixty-five years. He said, “I did not attend any school, but I read a lot.” And he added, “I am very happy when I read, and also when I cook. And my family is well aware of this.”

His reading, his mastery, and his meals are all very tasteful. He said, “This is all because I have read.” He told me how pleased he was with his life, his family and Cizre. May God increase his gratitude. He has been working for sixty-five years without complaining about his conditions. May God save us from the days when he is gone!

Well, so, what have we eaten at Sinan Usta’s restaurant?

Spicy bulgur pilav (Simply the best ever!)

Tandırılı pilav (Pilav with *tandır* meat)

Misket köfteli nohut (Chickpeas with marble-size *köftes*)

Spinach with ground meat

Eggplants with sumac and ribs (A masterpiece for eggplant enthusiasts!)

Ispir beans<sup>90</sup>

Whatever we ate, it was all delicious. May God bless Sinan Usta’s hands, and his work!

### **Çamlıca Meat Restaurant**

Another Cizre restaurant open for twenty-four hours... Sheep’s head and feet are cooked in its own fat without adding any water. And you add lots of garlic, and savor it. Their chicken which gets boiled and fried goes so well with their *bulgur pilavi*. Its casserole, *tandır* and ribs are way above the standards... The *ayran* and *tandır bread* made in-house adds even more zest to their already delicious dishes.

### **The Bakery in the Wholesale Vegetable Market**

The name of this bakery is “The Bakery in the Wholesale Vegetable Market”. It neither has an official name nor a shop sign. A speakeasy bakery in Cizre... It is located somewhere close to the center of the vegetable market in the city of Cizre... You can have your breakfast here with whatever you are yearning for. For instance, you can buy some cheese from the cheese shop in the vegetable market, bring it here, and ask them to make you a *pide* with cheese and butter-ghee. Alternatively, you can shop for more items, and order your *pide* richer. A good combination is spicy green peppers, onions, garlic, black sesame, Cizre cheese and eggs. Enjoy it with some strong tea, which you can order from the tea house right next door.

<sup>90</sup> “*Ispir*” is the name of an area in Erzurum in Eastern Turkey. *Ispir beans* are first quality, white, round, tiny beans harvested from different regions in Turkey, but originally and mostly from the Black Sea and Erzurum-Ispir regions. They are sometimes named as sugar beans because of its delicious sweet taste.



### **Guri Baba - Father Guri**

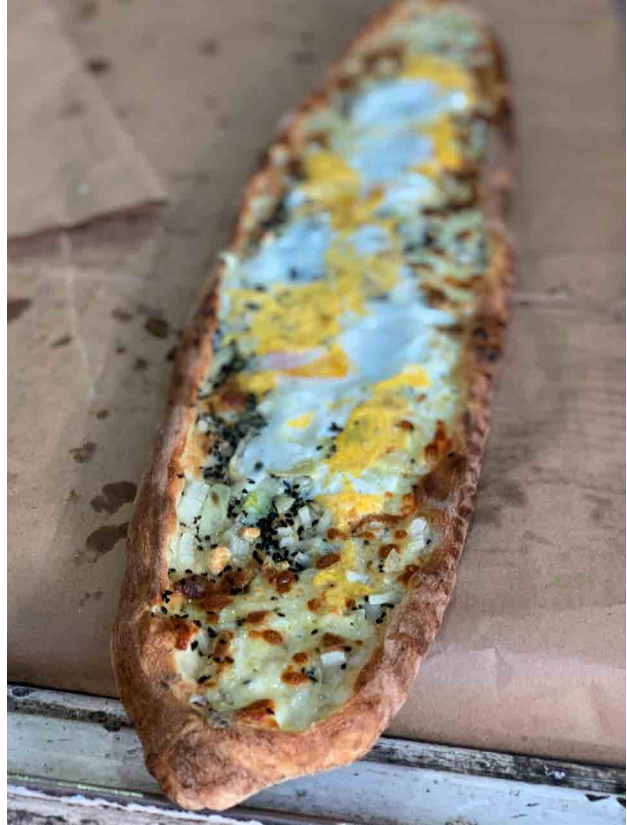
The most far-famed kebab house in Cizre... They make Cizre kebab with sumac. In other words, they serve the ground-meat kebab with lots of sumac. If you go there around lunch time, you will end up waiting for a while.

### **Cizre Dolması**

Mention Cizre, and one thinks of *dolma*... However, we could not find a restaurant serving it. That is why we will be coming back. The *dolmas* and *sarmas* (wraps made with vine leaves) of the local Bajari Tribe are quite famous. In the old days, the natives of Cizre would be serving their famous *dolmas*, which they would be making with ribs and seasonal vegetables in sumac water, during the weddings.

### **Cizre Tandır and Yufka Breads - Two kinds of Cizre Flatbreads: Tandır and Yufka**

Every neighborhood has its own *tandır* at a convenient corner in the neighborhood. The fire in it is kept alive all day long. The women of Cizre leaven the dough at night to have it ready the next morning. They come together in the morning to bake them in cooperation in the communal *tandır*. Just follow your nose as you are strolling through the Cizre neighborhoods, and you may get lucky with your share.















## Spicy Hot Bulgur Pilav

*2 glasses (cups) coarse bulgur*

*2 glasses (cups) broth (from meat)*

*1 glass (cup) water*

*1 onion*

*2 tomatoes*

*2 green peppers*

*2 table spoons tomato paste*

*1 table spoon pepper paste*

*2 table spoons isot*

*Komili Riviera Olive Oil*

*Black pepper, rock salt*

- Chop the onions, tomatoes, and peppers.
- Start sautéing the onions in olive oil in a pan. You will need the olive oil once again while resting the pilav. So use it cautiously.
- Add the bulgur, the tomato paste and the pepper paste. Continue sautéing.
- Add the tomatoes, peppers, isot, black pepper and salt.
- Sauté for a few more minutes. Add the broth and water.
- At the moment when it starts to boil, lower the heat, and let it cook for another 15 minutes.
- In a separate pan, heat the olive oil, and drizzle over the pilav. Leave it aside to rest for 15 minutes with the lid covered.
- Serve it with *ayran* and onions.











## From İLUH VILLAGE to **BATMAN**

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*I did not know before; and I was  
so surprised when I learned that  
Batman is actually a city, which  
was designed and founded much  
later... I am not quite sure how I  
missed this piece of information  
although I had been here before.*

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The destiny of Siirt's İluh Village changes when TPAO (Turkish Petroleum Incorporated Company) gets founded at the beginning of 1950s. Rumor has it that Batı Raman Village was the first place where oil was drilled. Following that, the two-word name of the village was shortened to Batman using the first three letters of the first word, and the last three of the second. The village gets larger over time, and on September 2, 1957, it gets recorded as the district of Batman in the registers. And finally, in 1990, it gets separated from Siirt, and becomes a city.

Yeni Batman (New Batman) city has a cosmopolitan structure due to incoming migration, and commercial activities. People coming from Mardin, Siirt, Şırnak, and the other surrounding cities have started living together in Batman while creating a new cosmopolitan culture.

This cosmopolitan culture exposes itself most evidently in the local cuisine. Each new-coming family had carried its own local cuisine while settling. Over time, the new-comers exchanged information and know-how, and learned new stuff from their neighbors. Consequently, a characteristic cuisine specific to the region was formed.

### **Hasankeyf**

This is a city full of archaeological ruins. Here, twenty-one separate civilizations had been founded on top of each other. Since the area will be under water after the Ilisu Dam is completed, they have started moving some of the historic monuments. When I visited in July, the moving had started. And when I re-visited, the minaret had been moved. The area will be going into a long sleep.

### **Elma Sokağı - Apple Street**

This is Old Town Batman... This is where you find the Ulu Cami (the Grand Mosque). And the local tradesmen... And the spice shops, the cheese shops, the sheep head shops, the bakeries all in one side... And the tailors, the textile shops, and furnishings shops on the other... The offal displays in the butcher shops are especially worth seeing. I suggest that you take a tour in this market during your visit to Batman.

### **Now, it is time for Batman restaurants...**

#### **Haşlamacı Mehmet Usta - Mehmet Usta, the Haşlama Cook (The best kavurma in the East)**

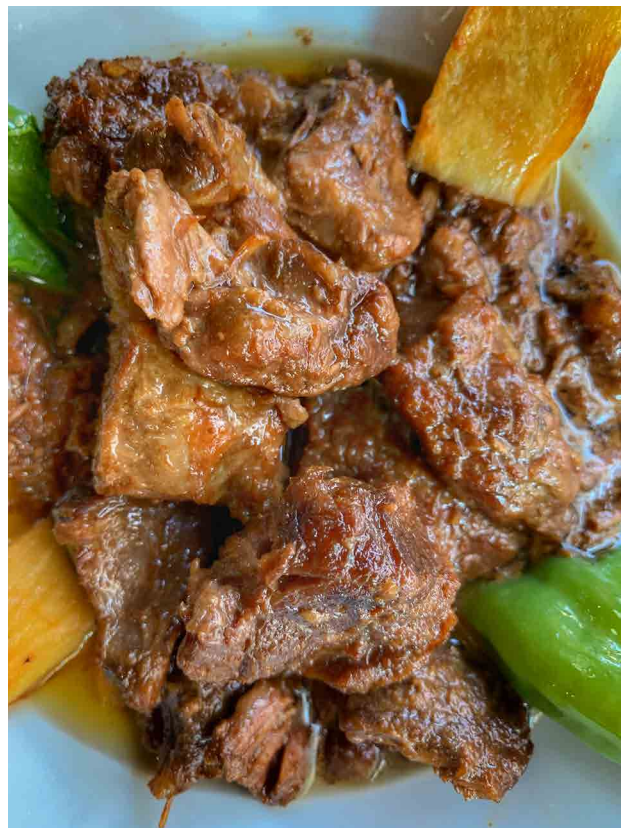
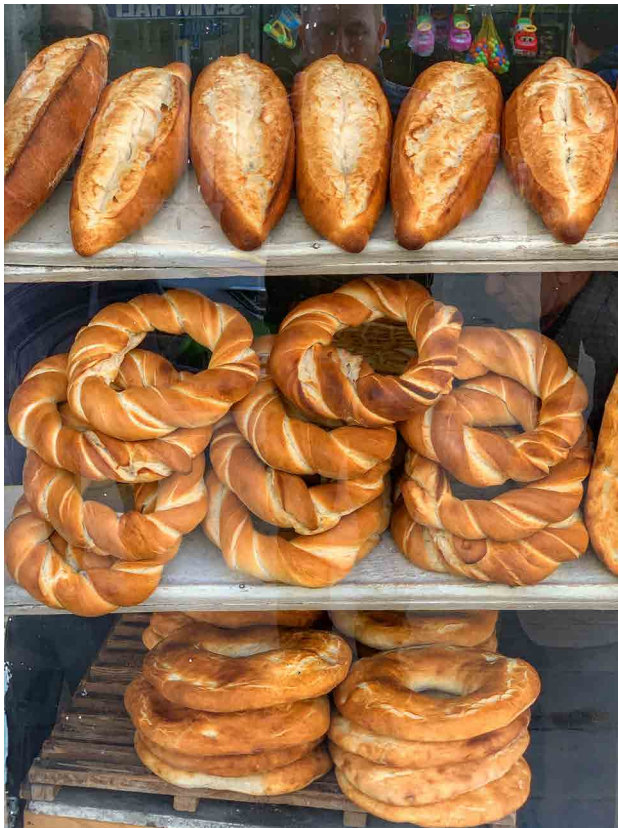
I have to give it to him; the best *kavurma* I ate anywhere in the East was here. In fact, I can easily say that this one makes the overall list of Turkey's top three. Besides the *kavurma*, its lamb ribs, lentil soup made with *kavurma*, and the casserole are very delicious. They told me that the officers, who are assigned to duty in Batman, rejoice upon the assignment, because it gives them a chance to eat *kavurma* at Mehmet Usta's place. I agree; Mehmet Usta's *kavurma* is a reason on its own to come to Batman from the neighboring cities or regions.

### **Çömçe Restaurant**

One of the oldest restaurants in Batman... When I inquired about recommendations for Batman restaurants, 99 out of 100 told me, "You have to go to Çömçe Restaurant." We had a chance to taste almost everything made here, but the *sac tava* is unmatched! *Perde pilavı*<sup>91</sup>, large-cut *döner*, and *lahmacun* were in the top of the list. A visit to Batman would not be complete without a stop here.

<sup>91</sup> "Perde pilavı or perdeli pilav (covered pilav)" is a rice *pilav* with chicken, onions and pine nuts enveloped in a thin layer of dough (the perde or the covering), topped with almonds. The pilav looks like a cake before it is cut. It can come in small one-person servings, or large sizes.











### **Xalo Heyran Ciğer - Xalo Hayren Liver Restaurant**

*Xalo Heyran*<sup>92</sup> is the equivalent of “*Dayın sana kurban!*”. There is a whole concept behind these lines, but the gist of it is about showing admiration and love to someone. And that is exactly what people working in this shop do. Ferhat Usta, who takes care of the oven, and the cooking there, is working hard to present the most delicious liver to you. He gives you information. When you approach the counter, he puts a bite of liver in some bread, and offers it to you. In short, he tries his best to deserve the reputation his restaurant already has. The liver is really delicious. I think it goes hand in hand with Diyarbakır and Gaziantep livers.

### **Petrol Fırın - Petroleum Bakery**

A family establishment that has been around for more than twenty years... The name of the bakery comes from the fact that they had opened their first shop in TPAO (Turkish Petroleum Incorporated Company) grounds. They are both a bakery and a cafe. Batman’s inhabitants love them. All of their branches are jam-packed all the time. The desserts, breads, and cookies are famed all over the city.

### **Other recommendations: Ocakbaşı<sup>93</sup> Mehmet Usta**

His lamb shish, and lamb kebab are very famous. The ground meat kebab is among the favorites.

### **Kebabçı Cuma Usta - Cuma Usta, the Kebab Cook**

He is one of those who have migrated from Antep to Batman many years ago. His place is at the old industrial zone. He makes delicious meats and kebabs.

### **Urfalı (Especially döner)**

His place is among the good restaurants of Batman. Yet, everyone pinpoints his *döner*.

### **Batman’s Büryan<sup>94</sup>**

*Büryan kebab* is known to be a specialty of Siirt. Since Batman used to be under the jurisdiction of Siirt, it is quite natural that *büryan kebab* is also made here. There are two good addresses for this here:

*Geçit Büryan*

*Botan Büryan*

<sup>92</sup> “*Xalo Heyran*” is in Kurdish, and it translates into “Your uncle is your admirer”. The Turkish equivalent is “*Dayın sana kurban!*”, which would literally translate into “I am ready to sacrifice myself as your uncle.” Its underlying meaning is, “I love you so much, I would sacrifice myself.” Both phrases work as a compliment showing admiration and love for someone.

<sup>93</sup> “*Ocakbaşı*” translates literally into “by the stove”, but the true sense is more like “fireside” or “by the grill”. It refers to a specific genre of restaurant, where a large hooded charcoal barbecue is fixed in one part of the restaurant. Patrons typically sit around the barbecue, and watch the grill master prepare the grills. It invokes a little conversation, and interaction with the cooking process.

<sup>94</sup> “*Büryan*” defines a method of slow-roasting lamb or goat (kid) over charcoal fire and/or ashes in a pit. It can be considered as the Turkish version of rotisserie or Texas pit BBQ. The result is exceptionally tender meat covered with crunchy cracklings.





# SIIRT

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*Siirt is one of my favorite cities in the East. It radiates the warmth of the East, that of Anatolia, and the South. It has a unique culture under the influence of the surrounding geography. The markets... The sounds you hear while strolling through its markets... And the dinner tables of the city... They are all different... The influence of the dishes, and the feeling of peace I get from the spirituality of Tillo have a lot to do with my love for Siirt.*

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## **Speaking of Siirt, one needs to mention B ryan**

In fact, it is more accurate to call *b ryan* as the crown dish of the cuisines of Siirt and Bitlis. It is equally famous in both cities. In any case, *b ryan* is a cooking method the Turks have been using since the times of the Seljuks without any changes in either the name or the method. The Seljuks named the person, who prepared the *b ryan*, as *b ryanger*. The fact that the person had a specific title designated to him is proof that making *b ryan* required a certain expertise even back then.

A six-month to one-year old lamb gets hung in a *büryan oven*. At the bottom of the three-meter deep *büryan oven* some oak wood ash lies. The boned lamb is spitted over this, cooking for two and a half hours in hanging position. The whole piece is then taken over the counter—many times hanging vertically on a hook—to be weighed in a scale, and served customized to the desires of the customer; the fatty part, the lean part, the bony part, plain without bones, the fatty bony part, the cracklings...

You can taste *büryan* in several places in Siirt. Every family has its favorite place. I have two recommendations:

*Huzur Büryan*

*Uğur Büryan*

### **Perde Pilavı**

*Perde pilavı* is another dish one recalls hearing the mention of Siirt. Everything about it—preparation, eating, story—is a ritual in itself...

It is cooked as a representation of the family, especially when someone in the family gets married. It has a specific pot designated for it. A *pilav* is prepared using rice, chicken, currants, pine nuts, and black pepper. On the side, a *yufka* (thin roll of dough) is prepared. The *pilav pot* gets buttered first. A scarce layer of almonds are placed in it. The *yufka* is spread carefully to cover the bottom and the sides of the pot, draping over from the edges. The *pilav* is filled in, and the hanging drapes are turned over the *pilav filling* before going in to the oven. After turning light brown, it is taken out of the oven to be served in the middle of the table in its cooking-pot.

If the *perde pilavı* is specifically made for the newly-weds, the dish comes almost as a summary of marriage; or a reminder of certain members and principles of a marriage; and each ingredient comes with a certain representation; almonds for sons, pine nuts for daughters, black peppers for bitter days of life, and currants for the sweet days of life... And keeping all of this under a *perde*, i.e. a drape, or covering, works as a reminder of the necessity of keeping family secrets within the family.

### **Botan Gorge**

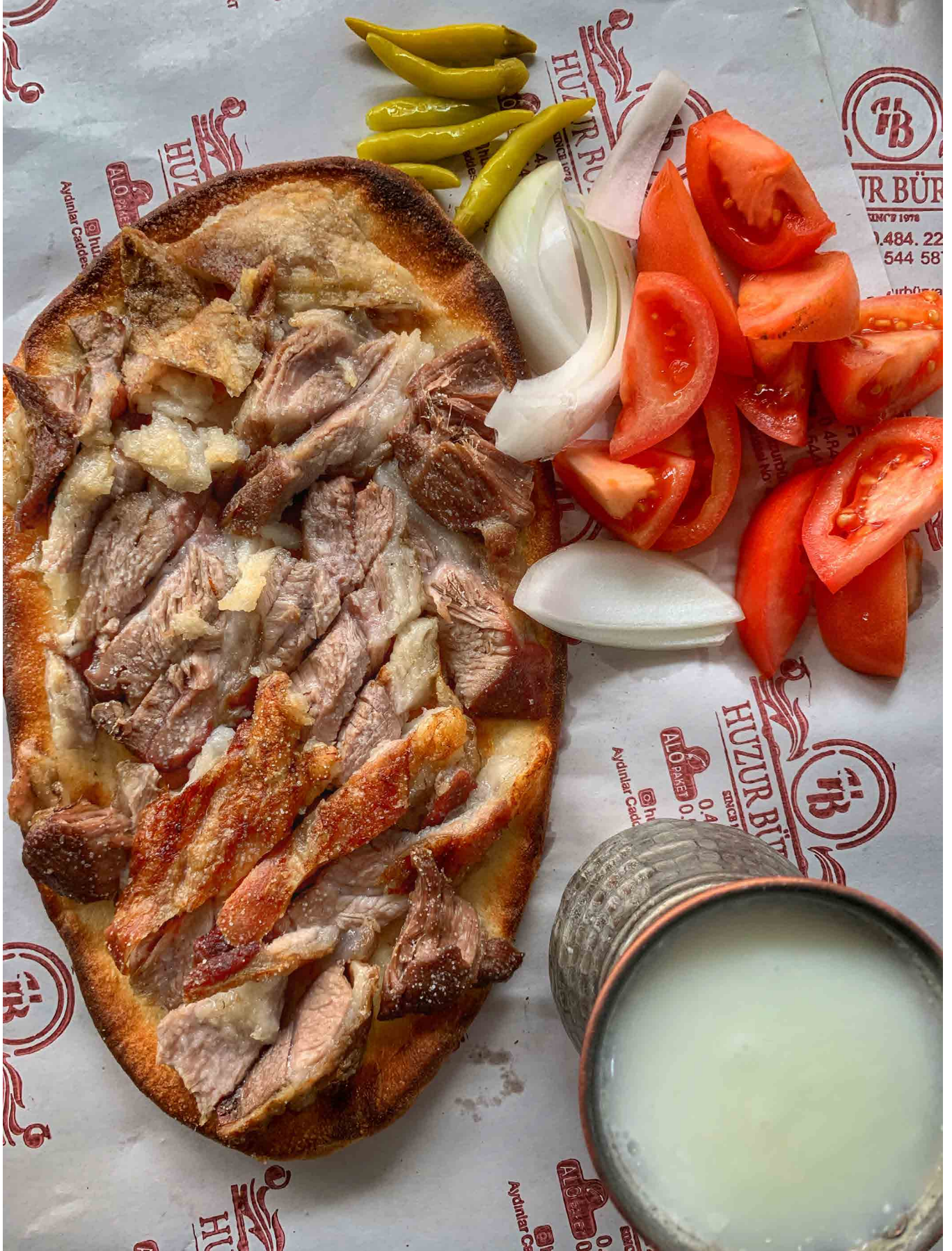
This gorge has one the most beautiful sceneries you can see in Turkey. You can reach here by first heading for Tillo, which is six kilometers from Siirt, and then, by going up the hill for a few kilometers. You would not be expecting such a view here, and you will be pleasantly surprised.

The Botan Gorge, which witnessed “Anabasis (Return of Thousands)”, written in 401 B.C. by Xenophon, houses numerous archaeological mounds, ancient roads, caves, church ruins, castles, caravanserais, bridges, mosques and mills. The Botan Gorge, where the Botan Stream—a tributary of River Tigris— runs, is one of the steepest and most precipitous gorges of Turkey. You will want to gaze for hours at the scenery that displays different kinds of beauties in each season, in each month, and each moment.

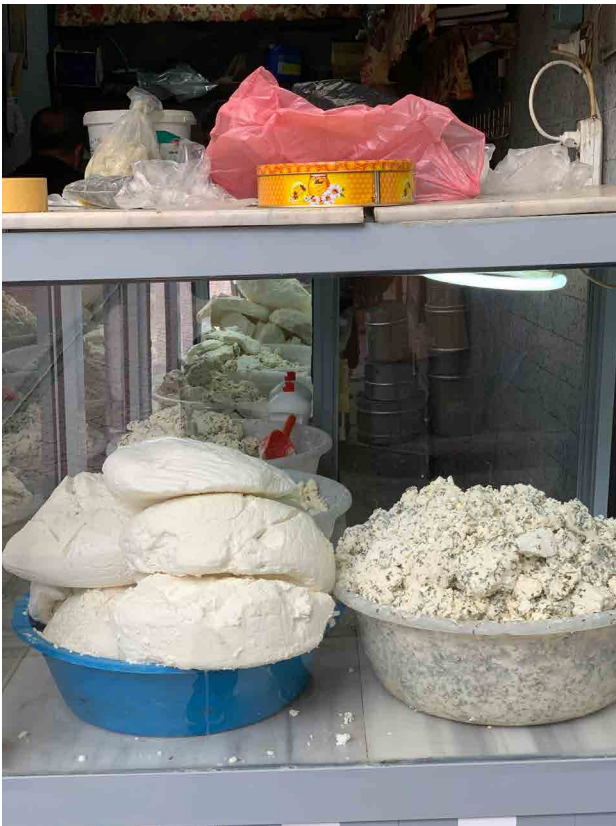


















## Tillo

The word “Tillo” stands for “rising souls’ in Aramaic (Assyriac). The village is historically known as the “city of saints”. I consider it as a most mystic and not-to-be-missed city in Turkey. The moment you enter its borders a certain spirituality captures you. In the older days, people would take off their shoes at the borders of Tillo, and enter bare foot as a sign of respect for the saints. Tillo is a truly beautiful city, where one can still hear the hymns of the students pouring out of the windows of the house-schools into the cobblestone streets...

The tombs of the valuable teacher İsmail Fakirullah Hazretleri (1655-1734), and his student İbrahim Hakkı Hazretleri are here. The location is visited by tens of thousands of people every year.

İbrahim Hakkı Hazretleri, who had calculated the distance between the Earth and the Moon as 43.198 *fersah*<sup>95</sup>, was born in 1703 in Erzurum. Later on, he had moved to Tillo, where his teacher İsmail Fakirullah Hazretleri was located. Following the death of his beloved mentor and teacher, he designed a special light system (The Light Refraction Mechanism) saying, “What use is the sun if it does not shine on the head of my teacher?”

During the two equinoxes (March 21 and September 23), the light of the rising sun reaches to the castle from the valley behind it. As it cannot go through the walls of the castle, the city of Tillo remains more or less in dark. But the light goes through a window on the castle, reflects from a nearby hill, finally reaching the specially positioned stones of the wall of the tomb allowing the light to enter in such an angle that it reaches inside, and falls onto the head piece of the grave. Tillo gets jam-packed every year during the equinox days with people who want to experience this phenomenon.

“Tillo was the last stop of my trip to the East this year. Molla<sup>96</sup> Burhaneddin Hoca<sup>97</sup> did not want me to leave the dervish lodge without accepting the offer for a meal. They prepared a long floor table. *Pilav* and *sebzeli türlü* (vegetable stew), which was rich in garlic, tomato paste, and vegetables, were the servings. I cannot begin to tell how inscribed this dish is in my mind despite the fact that I had already eaten before this. I always wonder when I come to remember this memory; what would I have felt if I was hungry?... (2013)”

Yes, the last stop of this trip to the East was once again Tillo just as I mentioned in this piece of writing from 2013. What a coincidence! And I still remember the taste of that dish I had eaten six years ago...

<sup>95</sup> “*Fersah*” or “*parasang*” is a historical unit of itinerant distance, the length of which varied according to terrain and speed of travel. The European equivalent is the league. It may have originally been some fraction of the distance an infantryman could march in some predefined period of time. In its broadest sense, it may be considered as a measure of distance equivalent to approximately five kilometers.

<sup>96</sup> “*Molla*” or “*Mollah*” or “*Mullah*” is a title of respect for a person, who is learned in, teaches, or expounds the sacred law in Islamic countries.

<sup>97</sup> “*Hoca*” or “*Hodja*” is a Muslim schoolmaster.



BİNGÖL HERBS



# HIGH TIME FOR HERBS IN BİNGÖL

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*I had visited Bingöl for the first time to give a lecture at a conference, upon the invitation of Dr. Uzeyir Kement, who is an instructor at the Bingöl University. Later, I participated in a workshop, and we carried out a thorough research in the field. During this workshop, Instructor Uzeyir had formed the Bingöl Gastro-Culture Project Team with people from his university. They put the region under detailed scrutiny from the perspective of gastronomy, and shared their research and findings in a book. “Gastro Kültür Bingöl” (“Bingöl’s Gastro-Culture”) is one of the most precious works written lately about Anatolian cuisine. We cannot thank them enough for this successful piece of work, which they have created using only their own means. May God bless them!*

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Sure enough, we took a kavurma break in Bingöl during this trip to the East. And, to top it all off, we tasted the delicious local honey varieties. We were there in April. Spring was in full bloom. Bingöl was bathed in green. The kitchens were at their peak in terms of variety. Now, I will be sharing my experiences from my trips, and my impressions from the book; “Bingöl’s Gastro-Culture”.

## Bingöl's Herbs

### TIRŞIK

*Tırşık* is usually served fresh, but it can also be sautéed with eggs as they do in Bingöl and its districts. It has a sour taste with an aroma like the lemon. No lemon juice or vinegar is added to salads and dishes made with *tırşık*. In some regions, the mashed leaves of *tırşık* are used as a ferment for making yoghurt. Because it has an appetizing characteristic, it is used in salads in Bingöl. It comes out in April and May in this region. Alternative local names are *tırşok*, *ekşice*, *ekşi ot*, *ekşilik*, *ekşimik*, *ekşi kulak*, *ekşimek*, *tırşu otu*, *ebem ekşisi*, *oğlak kulağı* and *labada*.

### YELING

Alternatively called as *yabani pırasa* (wild leeks), *sarı zambak* (yellow lily) and *çiriş otu*<sup>98</sup> (affodill) depending on the region, *yeling* grows in many different regions of Turkey. *Çiriş otu* grows abundantly in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, but also in several parts of the Eastern Anatolian Region. Unlike the other regions, the *çiriş otu soup* made in Bingöl has *kavurma* in it. Around Bingöl, *çiriş otu* is added fresh in the *bulgur pilavı*. In April and May, *çiriş otu* is used fresh in the soups. But for consumption in the other months, it is stored after being dried.

### MAŞING

The more common name used for *maşing* by the public is *padişah otu* (sultan's herb) or *yemlik* (feeder). It grows innately in nature in Central Anatolian, Eastern Anatolian and Southeastern Anatolian regions. Around Bingöl they come out in April and May, and they are used in salads. Besides, almost in the entire region, it is consumed fresh and uncooked, simply after washing and sprinkling some salt.

### KARDI

Alternative names for *Kardi otu*, depending on the region, are *yılan bıçağı* (snake's knife), *yılan yastığı* (snake's pillow), *yılan dili* (snake's tongue), *nivik*, *deli ot* (wild 'as in crazy wild' herb), *gavur pancarı* (infidel's beet) and *yaban pancarı* (wild beet). This plant grows in the forested parts of Bingöl. It is used in soups (with *kavurma*) especially in the districts of Yayladere, Yedisu, Karlıova, Kiğı and Adaklı. *Kardi otu* has long stems. The stems are braided before the plant is dried in a place, which does not get any direct sun light. This herb is poisonous when consumed fresh, however, it loses this characteristic when it is dried or boiled.

### PUNE

In Bingöl, *pune* is used especially in the soups as a substitute for mint in melted butter. It is also known as wild mint in the region. The skirts of River Murat and the Valley of Peri Suyu are its most common habitats in the region. In this region, it is consumed both fresh and dried in the soups and salads. Its most common use is in the *ayran aşı*<sup>99</sup> soup that is locally named as “gêrmê duê”.

<sup>98</sup> “*Ot*” translates into “herb” in this context. It becomes “*otu*” if it follows a proper name. Eg: *çiriş otu* (the herb of *çiriş*)

<sup>99</sup> “*Ayran aşı*” translates into “ayran meal”. “Ayran” is a drink made by diluting plain yoghurt with water and adding a little salt. Therefore, it is most commonly served chilled. The soup may have any or all of the ingredients such as green lentils, wheat berries, chickpeas, and black-eyed peas.





### **MELACA (MELCI) (ASPARAGUS)**

*Melaca* or *melci* come out in April and May. The skirts of River Murat and the Valley of Peri Suyu are its most common habitats in the region. It is used in salads and soups. Asparagus can be found in season in the vegetable markets around Bingöl. An asparagus soup with yoghurt is made in the districts of Sancak and Genç. It is also used in *eggs with kavurma*.

### **LEMEK**

*Lemek* is served fresh and uncooked to the table like herbs like arugula. It is most commonly consumed with *bulgur pilavı* in Bingöl and its districts. It can also be added into salads. Besides, it can be chopped fine, and added into yoghurt to make *cacık*.

### **KENGER (GUETIK)**

*Kenger* grows almost in all parts of the region. Its most common use is in soups. The ingredients are the same as *ayran aşı soup*. Kenger is dried for winter consumption.

### **Bingöl Wintertime Kavurma**

In Bingöl, *wintertime kavurma* is prepared during the months of October and November using veal, goat or sheep meat. The calf, goat or sheep, which must be very plump and fatty, is butchered into large pieces of meat (excluding the offal). They get washed before going into the large tin-coated copper cauldrons in which they get boiled with the addition of very little water and some salt.

When the pieces are cooked well enough so that the bones are separated easily from the meat; and when there is no more water left, some butter is added in, and it is sautéed for a while. Once the sautéing is over, the meat is deboned, and put into zinc cauldrons. The melted fatty part remaining in the cooking cauldron is poured over the meat so that it covers them in the zinc cauldrons. They are stored in cool and dark places away from sun light for wintertime consumption.



## BİNGÖL CUISINE

### Kavut

*Kavut* is the name of the flour made with roasted wheat and barley grains that are ground in a mill. It would not be wrong to call it a type of roasted flour. In the Genç district of Bingöl, they mix this with some barley flour, and add some burnt butter in the middle before serving. In the Karlıova and Sancak districts, additionally, they mix some pears, and a flour made by grinding dried mulberries. And they substitute the butter in the middle with molasses. Yayladere and Kiğı districts have their own version for this sweet; they still use pears, and wheat flour, but add honey in the middle, and consume this for breakfast.

Besides the regional differences in the preparation, the topping differs from one area to another, too. It can alternatively have honey, molasses, or sugar on top. This kind of *kavut* also appears in the traditional Van breakfasts.

### Ayran Aşı Soup (gêrmê duê)

*Ayran aş* can be found in Eastern Anatolian cities like Erzurum, Bitlis, Ahlat, Iğdır, Van as well as in many other parts of Anatolia, despite variations. It is prevalingly consumed in and around Bingöl including the center and the surrounding districts. One major differentiation in the Bingöl region is the use of *yarpuz* (pennyroyal) in the soup as a substitute for fresh or dried mint, depending on the season.

### Yoğurtlu Kuşkonmaz Çorbası (gêrmê melci) - Asparagus Soup with Yoghurt

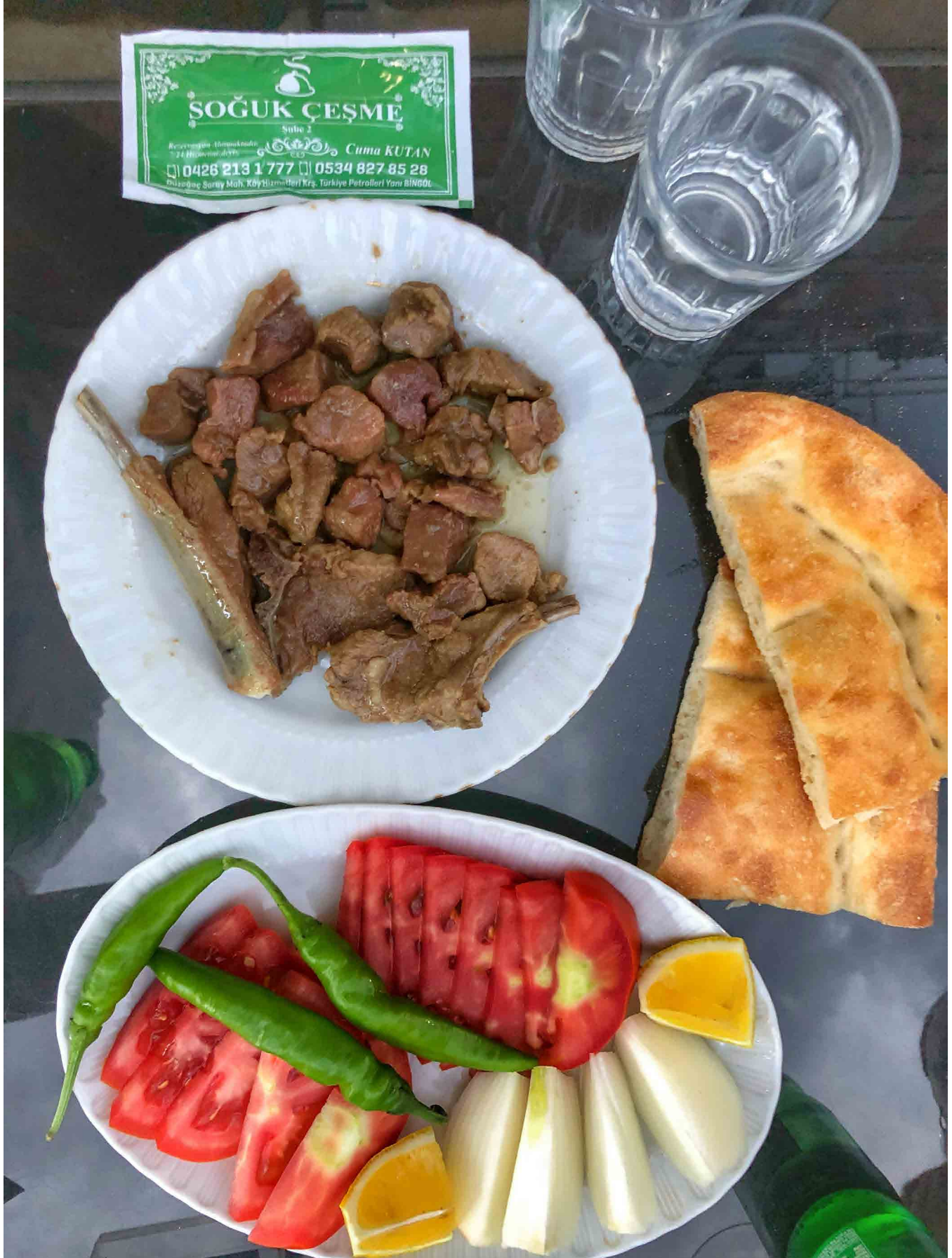
The asparagus plant grows naturally in the River Murat basin in Bingöl. It comes out in April. In the Genç district, fresh asparagus is made into soup, and some is preserved for wintertime consumption after being made into a paste. You cannot find this soup elsewhere in Bingöl.

### Jağ Kızartması - Fried Jağ Herb

*Jağ*, otherwise called *helis* (or *heliz*) *otu*, grows in the higher altitudes of Eastern Anatolia, and it is a major source of income for the public living in the countryside. In Bingöl, they make a pickle out of it. The pickles are fried, and used as snack. This herb grows in many other parts of Eastern Anatolia, and similar food items are made there, too.

### Bingöl Tava

*Bingöl tava*, is a dish prepared at the Elmalı village of central Bingöl. Many times it is called as “*Elmalı tava*” in this area. The most distinguished feature of *Bingöl tava* is that it is cooked in a stone oven. Also, they pay attention to using local produce. The meat used in *Bingöl tava* has to be one size bigger than the meat used in *kavurma*, and boned meat is fine to use. *Bingöl tava* gets cooked in 160°C - 180°C temperature, in ovens that are designed and designated only for tava-cooking. The only kind of fat used in cooking is tail-fat. *Bingöl tava* is served fresh out of the oven to the table in the tray it was cooked. People enjoy communal eating directly out of the tray.





### **Kavurmalı Helva (helawê qawırmi) - Flour Helva with Kavurma**

*Flour helva with kavurma* is a dessert that is made every time the *kavurma* is made. It is specific to the Sivan area of the district of Genç. It is not common in other districts of Bingöl. The flour helva is made around Anatolia as a dessert but this version with *kavurma* is a rarity. The reason why this flour helva is called “with *kavurma*” is not because there is *kavurma* meat in it, but because the remainders left in the cauldron after the *kavurma* is removed—that is; the tiny pieces of meat and the melted fat—are mixed with flour while all is roasted in a pan. It looks like the people of this area do not like wasting anything. Probably the originators wanted to make use of the leftover fat, and the recipe was transferred from one generation to another.

### **Bingöl in a Nutshell**

- You must eat *kavurma* at Soğuk Çeşme Kavurma Restaurant.
- Tavacı Nurettin Usta is one of the most famous restaurants in the region for *Bingöl tava*.
- Make sure to buy some *Bingöl kavurma* made in Bingöl by the Et ve Balık Kurumu (Meat and Fish Association).
- Asilkan Kavurma is another *kavurma* purchase recommendation.
- Stop by at the Lezzet Durağı (Taste Stop) Restaurant for regional specialities. Aysel Hanım makes Bingöl dishes here. Make sure to try the *mantı*<sup>100</sup> with *kavurma*.
- Cihan Katık Merkezi (Cihan Relish Center) inside the Dizdaroğlu Pasajı (covered shopping arcade) is the right address to buy honey, *kaymak* and dried fruits.
- Kardeşler Bal Merkezi (Brothers Honey Center) is the point for honey.

<sup>100</sup> “*Mantı*” can be defined as simply as ground-meat-filled dumplings. It comes in many different varieties and sizes. The filling and the size may vary, the recipe may change, but when you say *mantı*, the first thing that comes to mind is a ball of thin dough filled with spicy ground meat, boiled in water, and served with garlicky yogurt and hot butter with red pepper powder or tomato paste.





## Ot Kavurması - Kavurma made with Herbs

*Seasonal Bingöl herbs*

*4 eggs*

*1 onion*

*1 leek*

*Black pepper and rock salt*

*Komili Extra Virgin Olive Oil*

- Chop the onion and leek fine.
- Chop all the herbs mixed together in large pieces.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan, and put the chopped onion and leek in it.
- A few minutes after, add in the herb mix and the spices.
- Finally, crack the eggs. Cook the eggs to your liking, and serve.









ZİHNİ GÜLER

# TUNCELI, The 81st City

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*Yes, of course, the plate number is  
62 (not 81!), but what is important  
for me is that it is the last city that  
I have visited during my trips in  
Turkey, which have been going on  
for the last twenty years... And thus,  
now, there is no corner of Turkey  
left behind; I have laid foot on every  
crook and nanny! :)*

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I have put together my notes from this short-lived Tunceli trip for you. However, Zihni Güler's Tunceli photographs will be most rightfully telling about this place. I would like to thank Zihni Güler for his photography.



**I am summarizing here all the things I recommend you to do in Tunceli:**

**Munzur National Park:** Munzur Valley was announced as a national park in 1971. This valley, which starts at a point eight kilometers from the city center, extends all the way to Munzur Mountains. Even a ride in the car through the park would suffice. I think you should also have some tea at a point where you catch a great view. That is why I suggest that you take a *semaver* with you.

If the season is right, make sure to swim in the Munzur River waters. When the snow melts in spring, it brings the water level up, and the temperature is just right in May. Definitely! Try!

If you decide not to swim, then, you should definitely go for canoeing or a boat ride on the Munzur River.

One of the Tunceli rituals is to have some *kavurma*, or red spotted trout along the Munzur River. If you are there in summer, you can enjoy a special setting. All the restaurants put their tables in the water. And you just simply enjoy.

Another must-see in the area is Munzur Gözeleri (headwaters), which has turned into the symbol of Tunceli. The scenery here is truly enchanting. It is located on the skirts of Munzur Mountains, at a distance of seventeen kilometers from the Ovacık district. The ice-cold waters sprouting out of forty different sources create their own waterfalls.

In the meantime, if your plan is to reach Tunceli via Elazığ, the car ferry you can hop on in Pertek will be impressing you excessively. And so will the roadside vistas...

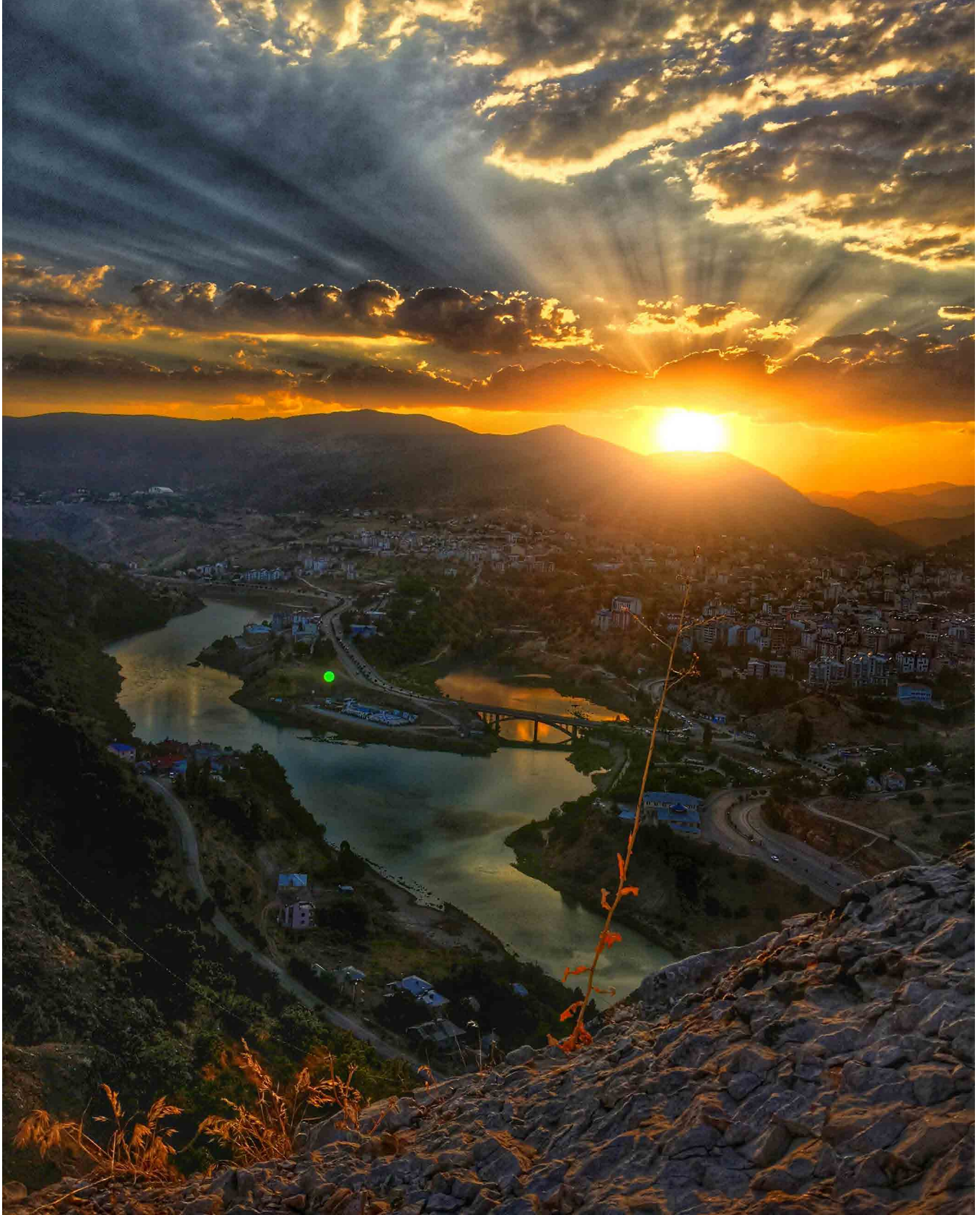
In the center of Tunceli, you can find many coffee houses with terraces overlooking to the scenery. In my humble opinion, having tea in one of these coffee houses, will make you feel the true sense of Tunceli.

My suggestions for purchases for yourself and your loved ones before leaving Tunceli include Pülümür honey, single-clove Tunceli garlic, Şavak tulum cheese, and hand-woven carpetbag.



ZİHNİ GÜLER









ZİHNİ GÜLER











# ADİYAMAN

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*I know how much you like the sea.  
Still... I will be waiting for you  
this summer in the Southeast,  
At Kumlu Tepe on Mount Nemrut.  
Come early one morning.  
Get to know me a little,  
and the place where I was born.  
You will see; the sun will rise  
gloriously above us,  
In all its might.  
It will warm you inside like my heart.  
You will reach out into a natural cave,  
and grasp a handful of snow,  
and purple violets from the spring,  
by those yellow wild roses that  
are like the fall.  
There, on that very day, you will  
experience four seasons.  
In the evenings fog falls on to Nemrut.  
And a cloud of silence covers its nights  
Like my own speechlessness.  
Coated with poppies, the uplands' skirts  
Snuggle into the River Euphrates,  
Talking about my thirst  
that resembles to my craving for you.  
In this wild and remote place,  
The drooping tulips  
Sometimes represent the people  
whose lands have been confiscated.  
Don't go! Stay a bit longer!  
In rivalry with the stone statues of Nemrut.  
Tonight, on this mountain, lovers  
Will be watching the setting of the sun.  
But when you are away, but when  
you are away,  
It will be like your presence scraped off my eyes.*

---

*Gönül Gözü (Eye of the Heart)  
Poem by Hülya Aslan*

*Mount Nemrut is among  
one of the best places in the  
world, where you can watch  
both sunrise and sunset.  
It also houses a monumental  
burial chamber and gigantic  
statues on two terraces.*

### **Nemrut**

Located in the Kâhta district of Adıyaman, Mount Nemrut has an altitude of 2148 meters above sea level. It has been on the list of UNESCO World Heritage List since 1987. The burial chamber and statues commissioned by Antiochus I of the Commagene Kingdom as a sign of his gratitude to his gods and ancestors, are considered among the most magnificent ruins of the Hellenistic Period.

Besides the monumental burial chamber and the colossal statues on it, Mount Nemrut is also home to terraces offering some of the most spectacular sunrises and sunsets in the world...

### **Oğuz Yenihayat's Adıyaman Notes**

Let us hear about Adıyaman from my dear friend in the culinary circles, Oğuz Yenihayat, who has been accompanying me on this trip from time to time.

- Adıyaman's meatless *çiğ köfte* has a geographical indication. The locals say that they do not go to restaurants to eat *çiğ köfte* because they always make it at home anyway. And at homes, they usually make it with meat. Many people, but especially the tradesmen, recommend Kenan Usta for *çiğ köfte*.

- Breakfasts in Adıyaman always come with grilled peppers and tomatoes. The public send them to the bakeries in trays for cooking. In the mornings, the streets, where the bakeries are located, are filled with the smell of grilling peppers.

- Sanayi Fırını (The Industrial Zone Bakery) is a fifty-year-old establishment. They make *hitap*, a savory, *börek*<sup>101</sup> specific to Adıyaman. Make sure to try it!

- The bakeries in Adıyaman do not charge for cooking the *tavas* sent from the homes.

- Neşet'in Yeri (Neşet's Place) overlooks to the scenery of Atatürk Dam Lake. Our breakfast here included tomatoes cooked in casserole with tail fat on top. That is how it gets cooked in the oven. The butter, the fresh cheese, the yoghurt, and the bread from the stone oven were all very good.

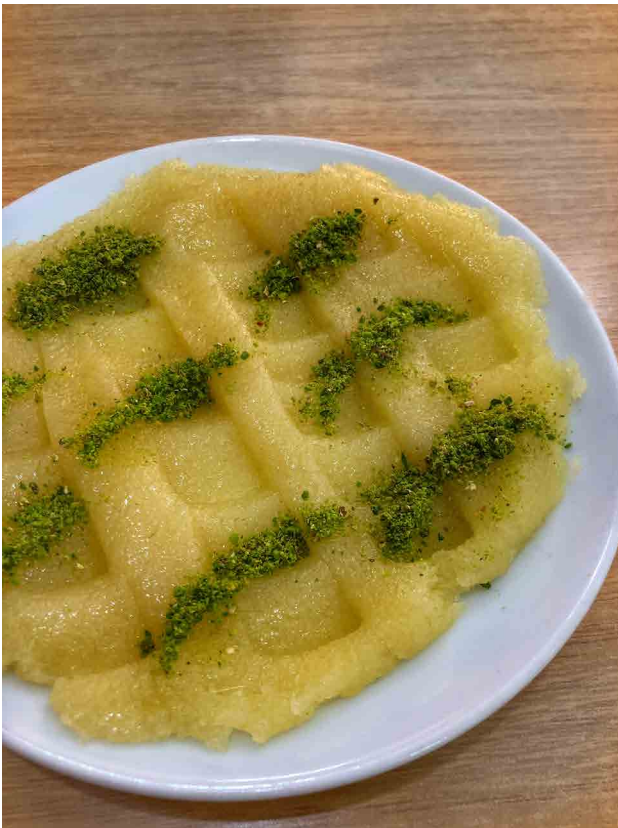
- If you want to try some *cheese helva* while in Adıyaman, the right address is Saray Pastanesi (Saray Patisserie).

<sup>101</sup> "*Börek*" is a generic name for savory pastry baked in oven, or fried in olive oil. It comes with all kinds of alternative fillings. The most commonly used ones are cheese, meat, chicken, spinach, and potato. It is made by rolling out several very thin pastry dough pieces called *yufka*. These phyllo dough are layered in a large flat pan or tray with the fillings in the middle. This type is usually cooked in the oven. But, it can also be made into rolls, triangular, square or flower shapes, and fried in oil.











### **Besni**

Besni is famous for its *tava*, meat cooked on tin plates and grapes... You know the big tin boxes used as cheese containers by the traders, right? They cut them open; line the meat on them, and send it to the bakery. We had our *Besni tava* prepared at Kasap Şahin (Butcher Şahin). We took it to Gopov'un Oğlunun Yeri (Gopov's Son's Place). That was the name of the bakery. And from there, we carried it to Besni Sevda Durağı (Besni Love Stop). It was a win-win situation. It is also possible to order *lahmacun* at the bakery. One more item this bakery is famous for is the bread prepared with chickpeas leavenings. It is quite difficult to find *Besni tava* in the center of Adiyaman. If you want to eat *Besni tava*, you definitely need to go to Besni.











### **Translator's Note**

While translating this book from Turkish to English, I have tried my best to do a faithful translation. I have simply tried to reproduce the author's own mixture of colloquialisms, localizations, repetitions, choice of words, and writing style.

Due to the nature of the main subject matter of this book (regional gastronomy) there were many local words, phrases, and expressions in Turkish that would not be even familiar to a Turkish person outside of the specific area. Therefore, a useful echo could not be reproduced in English. At such instances, I have kept the Turkish word in italics, and I have generally called attention to it in a footnote, or in parentheses. There were several such words appearing repetitively in the book. I chose to give an explanation for the word the first time it appears, and did not repeat an explanation each time.

Although some of the Turkish words for food items, dishes, provisions, and especially plants had equivalents in English, I preferred to include the Turkish name in italics followed by the English—if any— in parenthesis. I thought it would come handy to have the Turkish version, in case anyone wants to follow this book as a guide while visiting the mentioned locations and restaurants, or while researching further into any ingredients such as indigenous plants.

Similarly, I have kept the names of restaurants, meals, chefs or cooks with titles in Turkish; original titles of TV programs, articles and books, giving literal translations where necessary, either in footnotes, or in parenthesis next to them; or without parenthesis in the titles. Certain titles in Turkish reflected derivations from the originals based on the discretion of the author, and I have kept them as is.

At certain points, I could not have possibly refrained from giving the literal translations of certain words and names because they encompassed so much in them.

**Elizabet Narin Kurumlu**



M. ÖMÜR AKKOR

# KOMİLİ TRAVEL BOOK OF FLAVORS III

WITH ÖMÜR AKKOR

Translated By

Elizabet Narin Kurumlu



You can neither come to an end while traveling in Anatolia, nor while writing about it.

My love for this country will never come to an end either.

I have put together experiences and memories for you compiled

from a few thousand kilometers of my travels.

I only hope that you read them with the same enthusiasm I had.

Have a nice journey!

M. Ömür Akkor

*Komili*