

REFLECTIONS OF TURKEY'S GEOGRAPHICAL PROPERTIES ON THE REGIONAL CUISINES

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Abstract: All cuisines in the world have some features which may be considered almost common. These are defined as the features which differ that cuisine from the other cuisines. The regional cuisines and nutrition types of the communities are shaped by the geographical, ecological, cultural and economic features that play an efficient role throughout the historical process. Religion and beliefs, animal and plant diversity specific to the region, economic structures of the communities and the daily life styles shaped by these structures may be essential determinant of the cuisine. The features of the geography may specify the consumption types of the dishes as raw or cooked and the nutrition culture of the community. According to the gastronomy specialists, the richest cuisines of the world are Turkish, French and Chinese cuisines. In this study, which is based on a document examination, it is examined how general geographical features by regions reflect on the regional cuisines in Turkey, which has a significant place in the international platform with its cuisine.

Keywords: Regional Cuisines, Turkish Food, Roots Of Turkish Cuisine, Cuisine Culture, Gastronomy Tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The researches done set forth that the food culture is taking place in the factors which constitute the attractiveness of a destination (Bessiere, 1998; Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Hjalager and Richards, 2002; Long, 2004). Eating and drinking, whether global or local, has a significant place within the tourism movement (Aslan, Güneren ve Çoban, 2014; Chaney and Ryan, 2012; Rand, Heath and Alberts, 2003: 98). The varying culinary cultures of societies are always curious and worth trying for people from other societies. (Bekar and Belpınar, 2015). Although food and beverage consumption is seen as a type of tourism in recent years, it has always maintained its place and importance in tourism activities. The creation of a market for local food products in terms of tourists contributes to the development of the tourism sector (Boyne, Hall and Williams, 2003: 134) as well as the social and economic development of the region. Today, people eat outside not only for satisfying their hunger but also for experiencing the different experiences during that meal (Yüncü, 2010: 28). In fact, people can chance the miles of way to taste the food of a country or a region (Denizer, 2014).

The nutrition culture of a community is closely related to the way of life, and it varies from community to community, and from region to region (Baysal 1993; Oğuz, 1990; Şanlıer and Arıkan, 2001; Şanlıer, Cömert and Durlu-Özkaya, 2012; Tekgül and Baykan, 1993). The geographical, ecological, cultural and economic features that are influential in the historical process are shaping the regional cuisines and the eating styles of the communities. Religion and beliefs, diversity of animals and plants for the region, economic structures of the societies and everyday lifestyles shaped by these structures can be

the main determinant of the cuisine. The physical characteristics of the geography of living can be determined by the dietary culture, the consumption of raw or cooked food (Beşirli, 2010: 160). It should be noted that the technical knowledge of a nation's cuisine, and the richness, preparation, presentation and characteristics of the foods and beverages of the past generations are considered as gastronomic heritage.

II. ROOTS OF THE TURKISH CUISINE CULTURE

The dishes that reflect the characteristics of the area and are unique to the region are called local cuisine (Baran and Batman, 2013: 136). The local cuisines show the local climate, agricultural products, culinary culture and variety richness. Turkish cuisine, French and Chinese cuisines are among the richest cuisines in the world (Albayrak, 2013; Yergaliyeva, 2011: 62). Cultural accumulation, nomadic cultural influences and ethnic diversity are influential in the development of the gastronomic identity of the Turkish cuisine, historical developments and changes, intercultural interactions, geographical features (climatic conditions, plant diversity, agricultural and livestock activities etc.).

The interaction between Turkey and different cultures in the historical process, the diversity in the products presented from the past and present of the daily Asian and Anatolian cuisines, the new tastes developing in the Seljuk and Ottoman palaces have played a role in the shaping and diversification of today's Turkish cuisine culture. Today, a deep-rooted and miscellaneous Turkish culinary culture has been formed that contains the unique influences of local cuisines. The Anatolian Cuisine has become rich by the olive oil from the Aegean islands and Aegean

coast, olive oil from the south, Roman cuisine from Byzantium, and the Middle East, Southern Mediterranean and European cuisine with the spread of the Ottoman Empire to large territories. It has been constantly shaped in the context of shopping with different societies in the wide areas reached by the Ottoman Empire. Many of the Turkish cuisine such as fish, olives and olive oil dishes have come from the Byzantines. The nutrition system shaped by meat and fermented dairy products has been brought to Anatolia with the Turks migrating from Central Asia (Ciğerim, 1999; Güler, 2010).

In Central Asia, most of the Turkish tribes and nomadic Turks were not using herbal products for nutrition and the lamb meat and dairy products were constituting the main food products. Many methods used in ancient Turks are also used in Turkey today (Güler, 2010; Yılmaz, 2002:52).

III. GENERAL FEATURES OF THE TURKISH CUISINE CULTURE

There are many common features of the Turkish cuisine which has differentiated according to the regions and settlement units such as the village and the city both in the past and today.

- 1) In the Turkish cuisine culture, cereals have always been an important product. Although there are many kinds of meals, it is seen that the flour is used in the kitchen at most. Throughout history, the most popular foods were pastries and its varieties alongside the desserts made from dough.
- 2) In Turkish cuisine, meat is often cooked together with bulgur, rice, wheat or dough.
- 3) Bulgur is used in soup, bulgur pilaf and vegetable dishes as well as meatballs.
- 4) Soups are widely consumed. Especially tarhana soup, yoghurt soup, flour soup, lentil soup are among the most consumed and well known soups.
- 5) The most common types of oil used in meals are butter, inner oil and tail oil.
- 6) The most consumed beverages are ayran, various sorbets and compotes.

IV. GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN TURKEY AND EXAMPLES FROM THE REGIONAL CUISINES

The geographical features that vary according to the regions in Turkey affect the formation of local cuisines. Especially the changing climatic conditions, the diversified production activities and economic features are among the most important reasons for the formation of different regional cuisines in Turkey (Gökçe, 2016).

Climatic characteristics that vary according to the regions in Turkey have led to the diversification of agricultural products and animal products, followed by the change of products and production activities used in kitchens. For this reason, it is possible to see in regional kitchens of the regions;

- 1) Pastries that are based mainly on wheat use, specially in the Middle Anatolian Region of Turkey where is a grain mill of Turkey,
- 2) In the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, vegetables and fruits,
- 3) In the Southeastern Anatolia Region, red lentils and the desserts in which pistachios are used extensively,
- 4) In Eastern Anatolia Region, meat and dairy products,
- 5) In the Black Sea Region, fish and especially pheasants.

The effects of these general features mentioned in Turkey on the regional cuisines of the regions are tried to be explained with the below examples. Figure 1 shows the large areas where wheat is grown in Turkey. At the same time, the most commonly used grain in Turkey is wheat. As seen in Figure 1, wheat is grown mostly in Central Anatolia, Marmara and Southeastern Anatolia. It is possible to see the effect of cereal and wheat production in Central Anatolia Region with pastries in local cuisines.

Large areas of the plains in the Central Anatolian Region facilitated mechanized agriculture. The shape of the ground and the climatic conditions put grain farming forward in the region (Baysal, 1991). Wheat is produced at most in the region. For this reason, the regional cuisines of Kayseri, Eskişehir, Nevşehir and Sivas provinces famous with pastries constitute good examples of regional cuisines in the region. (Güldemir and Işık 2011). Manti in Kayseri region and Cig Borek in Eskişehir form the best examples of pastries in the kitchens. In addition to these, the cultural diversity of the region also contributes to the enrichment of culinary culture. Eskişehir province, which hosts many communities such as Alevi, Bosniak, Circassian, Kurdish, Manav, Muhacir, Pomak, Tatar, Turkman, Yoruk, has great potential in terms of gastronomic heritage with this cultural diversity. In particular, traditional and regional dishes have survived until today. Traditional eating customs still continue in Eskişehir. However, it has been observed that the influence of the Caucasian, Crimean and Balkan immigrants is significant in the local cuisine (Evren, and Kozak, 2012; Gökçe, 2016).

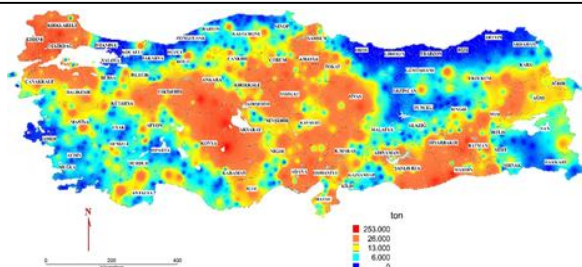


Figure 1. Wheat production in Turkey

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In other regions where wheat production is seen in Turkey, it is possible to see the reflections of these in local kitchens. Grain is grown in most of the arable land of Marmara Region. Therefore, in the kitchen of the region, pastries are very common and consumed to a large extent. Manti, pie and baked bread made in the villagers are just some of the pastries (Gökçe, 2016).

Southeastern Anatolia Region is famous for its dishes formed by combining bulgur with meat and vegetables. Due to the influence of the culturally neighboring Arabic region, desserts sweetened with sorghum, wheat flour and wheat starchy also stand out (Cömert, 2014). It is said that grain, especially wheat, which takes the first place in the Mediterranean nutrition system, has grown up in the Mediterranean since its earliest periods. The use of wheat products such as bulgur, couscous, ground wheat, unripe wheat is widespread especially in the Mediterranean and South (Başoğlu, 1995; Çevik, 1996).

The Aegean and the Mediterranean are the regions in Turkey where vegetables are produced at most. Vegetable use is very common in the cuisines of

these two regions. In Figure 2, artichoke planting sites are shown to be an example of vegetable production in Turkey. Artichoke is one of the oldest vegetables grown in history and it is preferred in kitchens because of its positive effects on human health. Scientific studies have shown that artichoke has cholesterol-lowering potential against cancers and helps to protect liver health. The region where artichoke production is most concentrated is the Aegean. In the local cuisine of the Aegean it is possible to see especially artichokes and olive oil artichokes.



Figure 2. Artichoke production in Turkey; Source: Kılıç, 2016

The Aegean kitchen is generally described as "green kitchen". A thousand kinds of herbs such as hibiscus, vine, nettle, cibez, radish herb, kenger, chindra, shepherd-i bostan, poppy, labada, hermit crabs, helvacik, radica, marine corn, asparagus, arable land, field nest, field nail is used in the kitchen in abundant quantities. These herbs are cooked in the kitchens as little as possible so both their colors and vitamins are preserved, and they are served by adding lemon juice and golden olive oil to them. Besides the abundantly consumed herbs, vegetables such as cowpea, leeks and aubergines are used more frequently in the Aegean region than other regions (Afyonkarahisar Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2015; Gökçe, 2016).

Again, the diversity occurred in the geographical features of the Marmara Region, reflected in the food culture. From fisheries to vegetable fruit growing, animal husbandry, to cereal production, it is possible to find in the regional cuisine all kinds of products which can be a material for the food. The local dishes made with vegetables are quite common in the local cuisine. For example, due to geographical conditions and various ethnic groups in the south of the Marmara Region, a rich culinary culture can be observed from pastries such as manti and pastries, to local foods made with vegetables such as ivy, cowpea and bitter sprouts (Balıkesir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2015).

White and red beets, biceps, okra, native to the Mediterranean; India originated aubergines and cucumbers make up only a few of the vegetables consumed in the Mediterranean. Most of the vegetables in the Mediterranean region are cooked with water together with meat cubes, sliced meat and

onion. Vegetable dishes are varieties of vegetable dishes such as meat dishes (aubergine curry or moussaka), fries, other vegetable dishes (aubergine, zucchini, pepper fry, etc.) and olive oil vegetable dishes (Başoğlu, 1995).

Figure 3 shows the lentil production map as an example of Turkish beef breeding. The Southeastern Anatolia region is characterized by pulses and especially lentil production. A wide variety of soups are made also in this region as it is in the entire Turkey. In these soups, the use of pulses and especially lentils is common. In addition to the lentil meatballs on the other hand, sweetsies made with pistachio nuts in the region are also particularly well known and sought.



Figure 3. Lentils production in Turkey; Source: Karakaş, 2016

In order to illustrate terrestrial animal breeding in Turkey, a sheep asset map is illustrated in Figure 4. The livestock activities in the Eastern Anatolia Region show also the influence of the local cuisines. A culinary culture based mainly on meat and dairy products has developed in the region. Both in winter and summer, all vegetables are cooked with meat. Mutton is used as a meat cubes and beef meat, and the beef is used as sliced meat (Akgün, 2013; Belli, 2009).

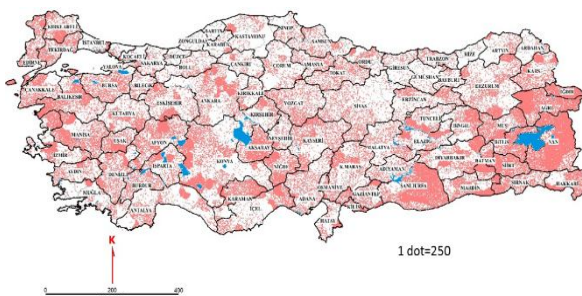


Figure 4. The presence of sheep in Turkey; Source: Yılmaz, 2016

Southeastern Anatolia Region's being characterized by animal breeding to a large extent has also affected the presence of meaty meals. The Kebab which is known by most of the foreigner tourists who visit Turkey is a meal specific to this region and this region provides a wide variety of kebab food (Artun, 1998).

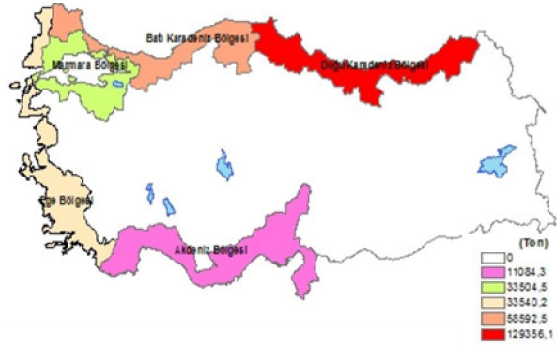


Figure 5. Map of the Distribution of the Rates of Hunted Water Products in Turkey;

Source: Kaya, 2016

Turkey is a country with 3 sides surrounded by seas. Despite this, fishing is one of the most important economic activities in the Black Sea Region, which is named from the sea it is located on the northern coast of the country. The three most important elements of the Black Sea cuisine are nuts, tea and anchovies. A wide variety of tastes are produced from anchovy, which is a significant richness of Black Sea, from soup to stew, from rice to dessert and pickles. Traditional anchovy dishes are consumed in this region throughout the year (Boran and Albayrak, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Culinary culture has an important place among the cultural values owned by a country. Food and culinary culture, which reflects the culture and lifestyle of a community, is an important feature that forms the touristic destination. Development and changes in the historical process, intercultural interactions, climate conditions, plant diversity, geographical features such as plant diversity and agriculture and livestock activities, have been influential in the formation of local cuisines in Turkey.

Climatic characteristics and production activities that vary according to the regions in Turkey have led to the diversification of agricultural products and animal products, followed by the change of products and production activities used in kitchens. For this reason, in regional kitchens of the regions; it is possible to see, depending on the climate conditions, meat and dairy products in Eastern Anatolia Region due to animal husbandry activities, and to see vegetables and fruits in the Aegean and Mediterranean Regions. It is possible to find pastries which are based on the use of wheat in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey, and to find red lentils and the desserts based on the use of pistachio in the Southeastern Anatolia Region. Due to the fact that all climate types can be seen in the Marmara Region, the diversity in geographical characteristics is reflected in the same variety to the culinary cultures and eating routines. It is possible to

see this diversity in the nutrition in the Marmara Region, from olive oil to meat and fish dishes. The fact that the three sides of the country are surrounded by the sea, and the presence of the stream and the lakes is reflected to the places around these areas, and integration of the water products into the regional cuisines has been ensured (Bayır, Sirkecioğlu ve Aras, 2009). As a result of this, it is possible to see the effect of fish and especially anchovy in local cuisine of Black Sea Region (Halıcı, 1996). Fishing activities in the Black Sea Region have resulted in the intensive preparation of anchovy dishes such as anchovy pans, anchovy bread, anchovy rice and anchovy pie in the local cuisine. In the Central Anatolia region, the commonness of grain and wheat production has shown itself in local cuisine with pastries such as manti and pastries. Livestock activities in the Eastern Anatolia Region have led to the development of a culinary culture based on meat and dairy products and the production of kebab varieties in local cuisines. The neighborhood of the Southeastern Anatolia Region with Arab countries from the south has caused the use of spicy foods, especially intense pepper, in regional cuisines. This effect has shown itself in local dishes such as raw meatballs and lahmacun. Various herbs growing in the Aegean region have led to the inclusion of meals such as arapsaçı dish, şevket-i bostan lamb-fried meats, stuffed squash blossoms, and olive oil artichokes in culinary cultures. In the Mediterranean region, culinary culture is generally based on cereal (especially wheat), olive oil, vegetable-fruit, aquatic products, milk derivatives, spices and wine. They are evaluated in the kitchens with various grains such as meat, bulgur, rice or vegetables. The best examples of these are simit kebab, kubbeh, lamb casserole with yoghurt, lamb stew with vegetables, aubergine kebab, forest kebab, stuffings, stews, sour soup, thimble soup. As a result, it is observed that the diversity of geographical features in Turkey is reflected on the regional cuisines of the regions.

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