

İÇİNDEKİLER

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The tasty triangle

Turkey has three new entries in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN): Istanbul as a city of design, Kütahya as a city of crafts and folk art, and finally Hatay (also known as Antioch) as a city of gastronomy. Previously, Gaziantep has taken the lead in Turkey as the first city to be designated a creative city in the gastronomy field. When these new entries were announced at the Tourism Council held 10 days ago in Ankara, some of the gastronomy council members were exhilarated to hear the news, not only for having another gastronomic city on the list but also for the inclusion of other themes that are closely related with gastronomy, such as design, crafts and folk art.

Naturally, the good news triggered a lot of discussions, and there were a lot of ideas put forward and several comments on the topic during the meetings. Kaya Demirer, the director of the Turkish Restaurant & Entertainment Association (TURYİD), says Istanbul becoming a hub of design has also a potential of contributing to the gastronomy sector, stimulating creativity mutually in both fields. Needless to say, Kütahya tiles are also closely related to gastronomy, the intricately drawn delightful patterns and vivid colors of the Kütahya plates adorn Turkish banquets.

Another participant, Tayyar Zaimoğlu, a leading entrepreneur in the restaurant and hospitality sector from Adana, stressed the fact that Adana is almost midway between the two gastronomic cities. Though not in the network yet, the city is famous for its cuisine, and considered to be the capital of kebab culture. Some natives of the town that reside in Istanbul are known to fly over just for lunch craving for their beloved kebabs. Actually, it would be a shame not to create a gastronomic route linking these three gastronomically significant cities: Hatay, Adana and Gaziantep, creating a sort of a tasty triangle, with lots of other points of culinary destinations added to the route such as Iskenderun, Mersin, Tarsus, and Kilis, all worth taking a detour just for eating delectable local specialties. Each of these towns has more or less a similar cuisine, but each having their own special tastes. Creating such a culinary route with the collaboration of local authorities and civil society can help boost the national tourism, which is always more focused on eating and shopping. Cities can learn from each other's best practices, join their forces and act collaboratively to turn the whole region as a culinary haven for international tourists.

With these thoughts bubbling in my mind, I attended to the fascinating talk on Aleppo, by historian Philip Mansel at the opening of the Levantine Heritage Foundation Conference. As inspiring as ever, listening to Mansel, I could not help think that actually the ultimate culinary capital of the region used to be Aleppo, once a fascinating city of diverse cultures. Both creative gastronomy cities of Gaziantep and Hatay used to be under the administration of the Vilayet (province) of Aleppo until only a century ago, cultural ties still strongly bond the cities together. Actually Gaziantep and Hatay have their connection through Aleppo rather than having a direct

linkage.

Ideally, Aleppo should also be gastronomic creative city; the real tasty triangle was once Aleppo, Antioch (Hatay), and Antep (Gaziantep). Let's hope that Aleppo will revive to its former glory; her sister cities are now hosting thousands of Aleppan refugees, hopefully they will be instrumental in creating further future bonds through food.

Bite of the week

RECIPE OF THE WEEK:

This recipe is by renowned food writer **Refika Birgül**, combining tepsi kebabı (literally round tray kebab of Hatay) and sebze kebabı, minced meat kebab with parsley and garlic of Gaziantep, combining two popular kebabs of both cities and creating a fusion cross culture taste. Have 400 gr medium fat beef, or preferably brisket, chopped finely by the butcher. Hand-chopped meat works better than minced meat in this recipe as the chunky meat remains juicier than machine-minced meat. Finely chop 2½ stalks of fresh spring garlic or mince 3 fat cloves garlic, chop 2-3 sprigs of fresh thyme, 2-3 stalks of fresh mint, and 10 stalks of parsley picking the leaves from the stalks first, finely chop a smallish capia pepper, add all to the meat. Season with about 1½ teaspoons salt, ½ teaspoon each of freshly milled black pepper and cumin, mix thoroughly and knead until the meat becomes a homogenous mass well worked with the herbs. Spread and press the meat mixture to a deep-dish pie or pizza tray or any metal or enamel round tray like a giant hamburger, push back the edges with a knife to make a neat shape. Dilute 1-heaped tablespoon of pepper paste with 3-4 tablespoons of water. Spread over the meat to cover evenly. Put quartered red onions around the edges and put a few green peppers seeded, and sliced lengthwise decoratively on the meat. Bake in pre-heated hot oven at 220 degrees for about 20-25 minutes.

FORK OF THE WEEK:

Best humus in Turkey comes from Hatay, if visiting the town, try it at every restaurant you go to, but do not forget to look for Baklaci, Humuscu Ibrahim. For other local dishes, Sultan Sofrası is a must-visit. <http://www.sultansofrasi.com/>

CORK OF THE WEEK:

Once again the wine selection comes from wine expert Mehmet Emin Türkat, when I asked about a pairing with the region's grapes his advice was prompt and precise. From the Elazığ region, Kayra's Alpavut project yields high quality, food friendly wine since the 2013 vintage, which will well go with this dish with its concentrated fruit, spicy complexity and lingering rich, almost savory finish. Another option would be Kuzeybağ, Oküzgözü wine again from Elazığ, with a slight touch of the indigenous Kösetevik grape in the blend, a local variety boosting up the structure, loads of fruit with spice and kernel notes that will support aromatic and savory kebab.

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