TURKISH CUISINE AS A COOK IT YOURSELF DESIGN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper aims to define a design brief depending on the i) Types and regions and ii) Social and traditional eating habits of Turkish Cuisine followed by a service design suggestion combining these aspects.

The quality, quantity and the organization of the tools related to food in a culture combined with the food itself, preparation and service signifies the level of civilization as well.

Turkish cuisine has a long history and various rich tastes by means of interaction with other societies. Not only the diverse geographical and climatic conditions from East to West, but a long history of different native and nomadic civilizations from Hittite to Persian, from Romans and Byzantine to Seljuk and Ottoman cultures has developed a unique and significant Turkish cuisine in Anatolia. One of the significant characteristics of Turkish cuisine is outdoor eating and picnic tradition. Outdoor eating and picnicking are common among the people of Turkey as well as conventional indoor eating not only to satisfy a basic need, but also to fulfil social needs and share entertaining activities as in the case of picnicking where people enjoy an outdoor type of entertainment and a social type of eating around a “mangal”, a kind of portable barbecue to grill meat and/or to make kebaps. Mangal has become varied in the recipes and has continued until now in Turkish cuisine. Another kind of Turkish eating tradition is called “kendin pişir kendin ye - cook it yourself” restaurants and they also depend on socialization and communication around kebab grilling mangals. These restaurants serve families, friends who wish to experience such social gatherings around grilling activity. The existence of fire by the side is a very significant element that is directly related to the importance of fire for the existence of human kind next to food and eating.

As a conclusion, with its long historical background and seven regions which have their kind of foods and recipes, Turkish cuisine is a big and rich cuisine. By analyzing different types of food and seven regions as part of social and traditional Turkish eating habits, “mangal” is the topic of this paper. To offer a cooking experience in restaurants, available angled tables are not suitable for socialization around kebab grilling mangals. Instead of angled tables, round table design is offered for “cook it yourself” restaurants which are more convenient for sharing foods and communication. Shortly, in this paper a design brief has defined for the combination of mangal, table and range hood design which involves Turkish eating habits, types and regions.

Key words: Turkish cuisine, Design brief, Service design, Experience.

1. Introduction

With cooking process, the raw food tastes and odors have been removed and foods have become more delicious, digestible. People have cooked foods with mixing so many kinds of them and used different kinds of cooking methods. Besides they have tried to improve the pleasure of eating. Cooking processes have affected by different societies’ traditions and environmental factors, furthermore, every community has created their kinds of preparing and cooking methods [1]. While eating is a natural phenomenon, habits depending on food and cuisine is a level reached long and diverse cultural experiences where geography has played an important role in life styles. According to Çetin the way we define, prepare and consume food also defines our social expressions [2]. Even there are common types of behavioral categories among different societies, these categories differ from one to the other and these differences form what we call “culture” [3].

1.2 Turkish Cuisine: Types and Regions

The quality, quantity and the organization of the tools related to food in a culture combined with the food itself, preparation and service signifies the level of
civilization as well. Turkish cuisine with its deep and
diverse cultural roots combined with a long history of
evolution and interaction of different civilizations has
turned out to be one of the most significant cuisines
in the World [3]. Not only the diverse geographical and
climatic conditions from East to West, but a long his-
tory of different native and nomadic civilizations from
Hittite to Persian, from Romans and Byzantine to Seljuk
and Ottoman cultures have developed a unique and
significant Turkish cuisine in Anatolia. Meat and dairy
food culture from Central Asia combined not only with
the settled cereal agricultural food culture of Mesopo-
tamia but also the fruit, vegetable and sea food culture
of Mediterranean has become one of the richest food
heritage in the world. Mainly originated from Maviş,
the general characteristics of a typical Turkish food can
be listed as [4]:
• Bread is an indispensable component of almost
every meal.
• Besides “kebaps” of different types and geographical
regions, stew also made with meat are often con-
sumed, and onion, meat, tomato paste and vegeta-
tables are usually roasted before the water is added for
cooking.
• Yoghurt and “Ayran” a dilluted type of yoghurt usual-
ly with water is an indispensable companion of clas-
sical Turkish food.
• Herbs like pepper, red pepper, cummin accompany
the food and appear as a standard tableware.
• “Bulgur” a type of cracked wheat is consumed not
only as a single food item, but as a supplement to
meats, stuffings, vegetables, and soups.

Turkish Cuisine as an expression can best be described
as a combination of “Cuisine of types” and “Regional
cuisines”. Even the basic types of Turkish cuisine are so
diverse like: soups, kebaps and meat dishes, rices, dried
beans, peas, lentils and such, chicken dishes, sea food,
hot and cold starters, stuffings and rolls, salads, egg
dishes, desserts. These types can also be rearranged as
seven regional and countless subregional cuisines. The
seven regional cuisines are, Aegean, Mediterranean,
Eastern Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia, Inland Ana-
tolia, and Black Sea regions [5]. Varieties of food, their
preparing and cooking methods, also the materials
which are used in these processes, have different spe-
cialty between this seven Turkish regions. In Southern
Anatolia Turkish pastry with pistachia and shrimp, also
spicy kebaps and steak tartar a la turca are common.
On the other hand, foods which are made from vege-
tables and milk puddings are common in Aegean. In
Inland and East Anatolia cereal products, rice and pas-
try are generally consumable [6].

In order to come up with a brief for a suitable “Cook
It Yourself Turkish Cuisine” dish, firstly these types and
regions have been analyzed in terms of i) preparation
times (peeling, chopping, shaping, grating), ii) cooking
times (boiling, roasting, grilling) divided into 15minute
intervals starting from 0 - 15 minutes to exceeding 60
minutes (Figure 1).

It’s been observed by the time analysis of Turkish Cui-
sine that sea food, egg and meat dishes and Mediter-
ranean, Black Sea and Marmara Regional foods are
comparatively shorter and more suitable for a “Cook It
Yourself” design. Kebaps, in which meat is exposed to
heat sources directly thus reducing the cooking pro-
cess turns out to be the most suitable kind and the
main dish of the traditional “ocakbaşı”– fireside way of
eating where people come together and eat besides
wood or coal grills all around Turkey.

1.3 Outdoor eating habits and Cook it Yourself in
Turkey
“Food” is the basic need for people, also has a signifi-
cant place to reinforce the social bond between peo-
ple [7].

Outdoor eating activities are common among the peo-
ple of Turkey not only in order to satisfy a basic need,
but also to fulfill social needs and share entertaining
activities as in the case of picnicing where people en-
joy an outdoor type of entertainment and a social type
of eating around a “mangal”, a kind of portable barbe-
cue to grill meat and/or to make kebaps (Figure 2) [8].

Another kind of Turkish eating tradition is called
“kendin pişir kendin ye - cook it yourself” restaurants
and they also depend on socialization and commu-
nication around kebap grilling mangals. Especially
in winter times, these restaurants serve to families,
friends, businessmen who wish to experience such so-
Social gatherings around a grilling activity. Because such a self grilling is also included in these restaurants it’s been observed that the time spent is relatively longer when compared with conventional ones. It’s also been observed that cooking and sharing the food in a companionship either in the form of a family or friendship increase the pleasure of experiencing food. The existence of fire by the side is a very significant element that is directly related to the importance of fire for the existence of human kind next to food and eating.

Food and eating is an indispensable component of ceremonies related from birth to death, from celebration to mourning. Diet and fasting have usually been linked to some kind of negative experiences or even suffering and punishment, awarded with an extra ordinary type of eating either in the intervals or at the end as in the case of Islamic Ramadan, where the meals during the fasting are more in terms of quantity and quality with regard to sual days, and there are two extra feasts all related to eating one in the form of sacrificing animals and eating, and the other one as its name denotes, “Şeker Bayramı - Feast of Candies”. All these traditions are events that strengthen the social ties in the society one way or another [10].

So called modern societies have increased the services and decreased the self experiences of doing and making, where Turkey and food are no exceptions. Making your own food is in decline while being replaced by industrial production and service organizations as all around the world. Yet in Turkey, the tradition of socialization around food resist in the form of “Cook it Yourself” type restaurants where people not only get the food they’ve ordered but cook as well. The reasons for such type of eating (Figure 3) have been observed as:

- Outdoor eating is more charming to home cooking as it allows an extended condition of socialization for family members and friends.
- It allows the customers to see, control, and actually make the items in the way they want.
- The architectural tendencies in the design of kitchens at homes which are getting smaller and smaller in size.

- It provides the customers not only a service in the type of a passive undertaking, but also an active participation in the process of making something to be shared, almost a sense of complete satisfaction from the beginning to the end.

2. Materials and Methods

In Cook it Yourself Restaurants, the stages of the whole service include i) preparation (peeling, chopping, mixing, marinating, etc.), ii) cooking (usually grilling), and iii) service where in conventional types of restaurants these stages are basically made up of i) ordering and ii) service. In order to come up with a brief to design a cook it yourself type of a service a survey has been prepared and applied to 60 people who go to self service restaurants. Two questions were asked them in face to face interview:

1. What kind of processes (choping, cooking, mixing etc.) do you prefer to do in cook it yourself restaurants?
2. What kind of processes do you prefer not to do in cook it yourself restaurants?

Regarding the design criteria especially of the elements of service from architecture to furniture and cooking components, rectangular shapes of the Western design tradition meets with the circular and curvilinear forms of the East, in Turkey. “Sini” (Figure 4), a large and round tray used as table is a perfect example of this circular design a more dominant form in the East. It must have been derived from nomadic circular mainly wooden short surfaces which were used both for preparing and servicing food. Circular sitting has always been a more egalitarian composition when compared with the rectangular shapes and more common in the East. It also provides ease of communication, equal access to the center with no hierarchical order.
Circular sitting is also advantageous for more crowded groups by providing a more equalitarian order to interact and communicate better than rectangular orders. Eating from the center as in the case of “sini”, is a shared social act rather than privatizing the food, and a very significant tradition in Turkish cuisine [13]. In modern West oriented restaurants privatization of food starts from the ordering stage that everybody takes his or her own food and consumes privately, whereas in most traditional circular Turkish cuisine experiences depend on common and shared usage of what’s on the table.

One of the tasks of our investigation was the suggestion of mangal and furniture design for “cook it yourself - kendin pişir, kendin ye” restaurants.

Following the principles mentioned above, a design brief for a cook it yourself type Turkish cuisine has been defined as a combined unit of two separate components until now:

1. Table: Previously a furniture item for sitting, communication, and eating.
2. Mangal/Grill (Cooking): Previously a cooking unit separate from the table and usually not used by the customers.
   - Type: Meat dishes/Kebaps suitable for relatively fast and manual control.

3. Results and Discussion

One of the most significant result regarding whole service is that, out of those who would definitely do the cooking and service by themselves, 65% would also like to participate in the preparation stages like mixing (the salad, the sauce) but none would like to participate in the post processes like cleaning (Figure 5 and Table 1).

The mangal and furniture design is suggested for “cook it yourself - kendin pişir, kendin ye” restaurants. People who wants to enjoy their meals while grilling meats, vegetables and kebaps can feel comfortable with this design. Socialism, communication and sharing is important between friends and families, so everybody enjoy their times while grilling and eating (Figures 6 and 7).

**Table 1. Survey results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefere.</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Cleaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>Peeling/Chopping</td>
<td>Mixing</td>
<td>Souce preparing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People prefer to do</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>People not prefer to do</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table’s round shape provide people to communicate each other easily. While they are cooking the meat or vegetables they can reach the mangal(grill) equally and enjoy their meal.

“Cook it Yourself” restaurants may prefer by large groups (Figure 8), the mangal’s round shape provide them larger area so they can cook as much as they want. The mangal has six parts in this design (it’s number can be increased for larger group). Their different face provide people different types of cooking.

The mangal’s inside and outside body is round thus, people can cook their meat gradually (Figure 9). If people want to cook their meat slower they can use the top of the body. If they want their meat more cooked they can use down side (Figures 9, 10 and 11).

The mangal’s removable parts provide people to clean it easily.

The mangal’s removable grill grates provide people to clean it easily.
In common restaurants people can’t cook kebab usually. By removing the parts on this mangal people can cook shish kebab if they prefer.

If people want to share their cooked meat with each other, they can put the meat on this part and turn it to the opposite side (Figure 12).

![Figure 12. The mangal’s turning part](image12)

People can make Turkish coffee after grilling and eating (Figure 13). Pleasure of Turkish coffee after dinner is common custom in Turkey.

![Figure 13. Making Turkish coffee after the grilling](image13)

The charcoal container can be removed and cleaned after grilling (Figure 14).

![Figure 14. The charcoal container](image14)

The ventless island range hood design can recirculate air and keep the air smelling fresh (Figure 15).

![Figure 15. The ventless island range hood](image15)

The modern lighting design provides equal lighting above the table and the recirculating air system of the range hood (Figures 16 and 17).

![Figure 16. The lighting of the range hood](image16)

![Figure 17. The recirculating air system of the range hood](image17)
4. Conclusions

- As a result, Cook it Yourself Restaurants in Turkey provide people an experience of cooking outside home in a wider social setting where they have almost full control over cooking the food they eat in the form of new experience when compared with conventional food servicing restaurants.

- At the end of this study special mangal, furniture and range hood design for cook it yourself restaurants have been suggested. In the future the effects of traditional cultures and social relationships on cooking and eating food will become more important and common.

5. References


