

Gastronomic Tourism Product Journey of Foods Linked to Migration and Religious Practices in Izmir Culinary Culture

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Abstract

The relationship between food and migration plays a significant role in shaping culinary culture throughout history. The history and geography of a region influences the available food sources within a particular culinary culture, both for hosts and migrants. This study undertakes a comprehensive examination of the evolution of three distinct culinary items: boyoz, sübye, and stuffed mussels. These foods represent an integral component and a rich heritage that has contributed to the development of Izmir cuisine. The study explores the influence of religion and ethnic cultures on the evolution of these foods, and how they have come to symbolize the culinary heritage of Izmir. A meticulous document analysis was conducted to trace the historical trajectory of these three symbolic foods, complemented by an examination of the impact of migrants and migrants' diaspora on the evolution of the host's culinary culture. The findings of this study indicated that geographical and historical shifts have influenced the culinary traditions of these three symbolic foods, resulting in the adaptation of recipes influenced by interactions between migrants and the host population. Consequently, unique culinary products have emerged, which have also contributed to the tourism industry's gastronomy sector.

Keywords: *Izmir cuisine culture; gastronomy tourism; boyoz, sübye, stuffed mussel*

Introduction

Food culture is also referred as food habits or food ways, is a pivotal aspect of various societal domains, including politics, society, economics, technology, religion, and environment. It encompasses the manner in which humans utilize food, the process involved in its selection, procurement, and distribution as well as the roles individuals in its preparation, service and consumption (Almerico 2014). It functions not only a representation of the cultural and the historical underpinnings of the sustainability but also as a significant industrial income generator in its own right. Furthermore, it serves as a gastronomy tourism product, enhancing travelers' experiences and underscoring the region's distinct ethnic, religious, and societal characteristics. A wide array of food cultures exist, distinguished by geographical location, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. It is evident that food culture is distinctive and a pivotal component of a society's overall culture. A thorough examination and analysis of the historical evolution of a region's culinary culture necessitates a multifaceted approach, encompassing an investigation of the variations applied to the products offered by geography, the interaction and role of food between migrants and hosts, the attitudes of the host region towards migrants, the political economic situation, the creativity of migrants, and their potential to create a hybrid food style (Abbots, 2016). This comprehensive analysis is essential for defining the culinary culture of that region.

Food is not only a physiological need as Maslow's hierarchy of needs explained (Sathiankomsorakrai et al., 2021) but also is a cultural element with individual and social aspects as the human understands by the life they live in (Beşirli, 2010). In short, the physical and cultural geography affects the food culture and creates the cuisines with some fundamental characteristics that distinguish it from others.

These are often limited by the restrictions of religion and beliefs, as well as region-specific fauna and flora (Şavkay, 2000). The change and transformation in the way of life also causes the food culture to change or to transform with the integration of the other cultures. The economic structures of societies and the daily life practices shaped by the economics structures are the primary determinants of cuisine culture (Beşirli, 2010). Whether the community is based on agricultural production or exhibits a nomadic lifestyle, the physical characteristics of the geography in which it lives will determine the nutritional culture, the way food is prepared and the time or the day of consumption.

Conversely, religion, which has been a constant presence in the lives of humans since prehistoric times, is a cultural phenomenon with a multitude of forms and beliefs. Food and beverages have consistently played a role in religious practices, serving a variety of purposes, including in rites, rituals, and as symbols of belief. When religion, which plays an important role as a social phenomenon, is evaluated from a gastronomic perspective, two important factors become apparent: the religious ecology that regulates the relationship between people and the ecosystem in which they live, and the norms that enable societies to live together (Aulet et al., 2021). Religious beliefs affect the types of food that should be consumed and, more importantly, the manner in which food is produced and processed (Heiman et al., 2019). For instance, Judaism has Kosher rules whereas Islam has Halal that shape the foods to balance the nature and the health. These dietary restrictions, in conjunction with the intensity of religiosity and beliefs, are factors that shape the cuisine culture. In essence, culinary cultures are shaped by three primary factors: geography, climate, and economy. While the geographical model may fluctuate due to various external influences, such as religion, politics, military conflict, and economic shifts, the abundance of agricultural

resources has historically led to the evolution of a diverse array of cuisines.

Gastronomy tourism is defined as a tourism activity characterised by the visitor's experience of food and related products and activities while travelling to different destinations around the world (UNTWO, 2019). The stronger relationship between the food and natural identity creates a marker for the destination images. In the field of tourism, cuisine culture including its components especially food itself has been started to be symbolized as one of the elements contributing to a destination brand image. Not only cuisine culture but also other activities such as festivals, museums, cooking workshops also considered in the field of gastronomy tourism studies (Putra, 2021). Countries generally try to develop experiences for a favourable and distinctive cuisine image as part of branding strategy with the aim of becoming a popular destination point for the visitors (Lai et al., 2019). Among the essential elements of a destination brand are a rich local history, an appealing cultural heritage, engaging cultural events and noteworthy local personalities from the past to the present. Among these, the gastronomy and its components are arguably one of the most crucial.

A food or dish may be perceived as a symbol of a region or as a means of distinguishing it from other products when it acquires a defining feature. One of the most significant indications that a product has become a symbol is the designation of a geographical indication. Geographically indicated products represent a reliable means of conveying the culinary culture, history, and geography of a region. Symbolic products can then play a strategic role in the branding of the region in the field of tourism, especially gastronomic tourism, and result in an increase in visitors. Consequently, this formulation has been expanded to include the assertion that the food product has become a symbol and gastronomy tourism product.

Gaberli et al. (2023) posit that travellers' intentions to return are positively influenced by their consumption of boyoz, a Turkish food item. Boyoz exerts a significant impact on cultural motivations over both short and medium time frames. Akgündüz et al. (2024) further emphasize the acceptance of boyoz, sübye, and stuffed mussel as premium components of Izmir's gastronomy tourism sector. The stuffed mussel has been well-received as both a street food and a seafood dish, while boyoz and sübye have been embraced as breakfast items in Izmir cuisine culture, reflecting the diversity of Izmir cuisine culture (Çakmak, 2022).

This study is designed to analyse the culinary culture of Izmir, with its distinctive culinary culture, through a historical analysis. The aim is to examine how religious rituals and ethnic differences have changed as people have started to live in the same geography. The dishes of boyoz, sübye and stuffed mussels, which have become emblematic of Izmir's culinary culture, have been selected for examination in order to determine their historical development and the ways in which they have diverged from their original forms, becoming distinctive elements of Izmir cuisine.

İzmir Cuisine Culture and Its Development

İzmir which is located in the Aegean region on the west side of the Türkiye is the third largest city with its population. Izmir is the cradle of civilization, a nexus of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is the nodal point of maritime trade routes connecting the Old World to the Silk Road and Mediterranean, which have carried culture, ideas, and goods and wealth for thousands of years. It is also the point of origin for two of the world's oldest trade routes. The city of Izmir has developed itself in the fields of agriculture and trade by using all the resources of the Mediterranean climate equipped with rich soils in the basins of the Aegean Region throughout history. In order to define the Izmir

cuisine culture, it is necessary to consider the historical development and geography of Izmir province and its surrounding areas.

As a city, Izmir has hosted numerous ethnic cultures throughout history, influencing its development with their habits, traditions, and customs, and blending with the products offered by the geography. The city of Izmir was founded on a peninsula and has been inhabited for at least 8,000 years. It has long been a harbour city, with the necessary fertile lands and water to support its population. Over time, it has become a city where people from diverse cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds can live together in harmony. The civilizations that have inhabited the region of Izmir have been profoundly influenced by the cultures that have preceded them and those that have surrounded them. In turn, they have benefited from the resources and opportunities that these lands have afforded them. They have managed to bring these influences into the present era from their heritage. In order to gain a deeper insight into the impact of migration, religion and race on Izmir cuisine, it is essential to examine the city's culinary history, which spans thousands of years.

The Ionians, who arrived in Izmir during the period of the Ancient Greeks, established 12 ancient Ionian cities and laid the foundations of democracy, philosophy, and civilisation in the Aegean region (Dökmeoğlu, 2017). This system, which was established, was adopted and continued by the Romans, preserved its culture and developed and progressed under the Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Empire. At that time, due to its status as a port city, the inhabitants of Izmir were able to benefit from a variety of seafood. Today, the city boasts kitchens offering a wide range of fruits and vegetables, as well as cereals, olives, figs, and grapes, which are important food items in the Aegean region. Izmir's demographic structure has always been considered to be affluent, and the city has been

subjected to various invasions throughout its history. Following the Ottoman period, the city's identity was shaped by a diverse population of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and foreigners of European origin, commonly referred to today as Franks or Levantines (Yetkin & Yılmaz, 2018). Izmir's status as a port city has made it one of the most important points of mercantile trade throughout history, and in addition to the diversity of its population, it has also enabled the city to accommodate citizens of various religions.

It is widely acknowledged that Izmir is one of the cities receiving immigration. Beginning with the Balkan Wars (1912) and continuing to the present day, in a period of approximately more than a hundred years, first Balkan immigrants, Cretan and Greek immigrants, and then, starting from the 1950s, immigrants from different parts of Anatolia settled in Izmir. In the 1960s and 1970s, Izmir began to receive immigrants from South-eastern Anatolia, particularly from Mardin, Diyarbakır and other cities. The most recent significant influx has been the migration of the of Mardin, which has intensified since 1993 due to the conflict in the Southeast and the evacuation of villages (Uhri, 2016). Additionally, the influx of migrants from Syria, Kobane, and Shengal has had a significant impact on the cultural landscape of Izmir over the past decade (Uhri, 2015).

The city of Izmir is situated in a region with a Mediterranean climate, which has resulted in the development of a distinctive and diverse culinary culture. This is due to the city's rich agricultural produce and its long history of hosting various civilisations. Over time, Izmir has developed in harmony with numerous cultures, including Sephardic, Lavender, Cretan, and Bosnian, which has influenced the city's gastronomic offerings. A plethora of Izmir dishes, ranging from street delicacies to those served in artisan restaurants, afford visitors a distinc-

tive gustatory experience. One of the cornerstones of Izmir cuisine is olive and olive oil, which offer a rich and diverse range of options. Pilafs, stuffed vegetables, and vegetable and meat dishes prepared in the Izmir region are all cooked with olive oil (Zagralı & Akbaba, 2015). Furthermore, olive oil is a fundamental component of breakfast menus. Another notable feature of Izmir cuisine is the prominence of herb dishes. The suitability of the vegetation that arises from the Mediterranean climate, coupled with the diversity, abundance and taste of the Aegean herbs that are grown accordingly, make Izmir cuisine stand out (Uhri & Öztürk, 2023). One of the most significant aspects of Izmir cuisine is the variety of dishes that can be consumed on the go. It is possible to serve a variety of street food delicacies, including *söğüş*, *kokoreç*, *gevrek*, stuffed mussels, *şambali*, *kumru*, and *lokma*, which are highly popular among the public and visitors, both with and without geographical indication.

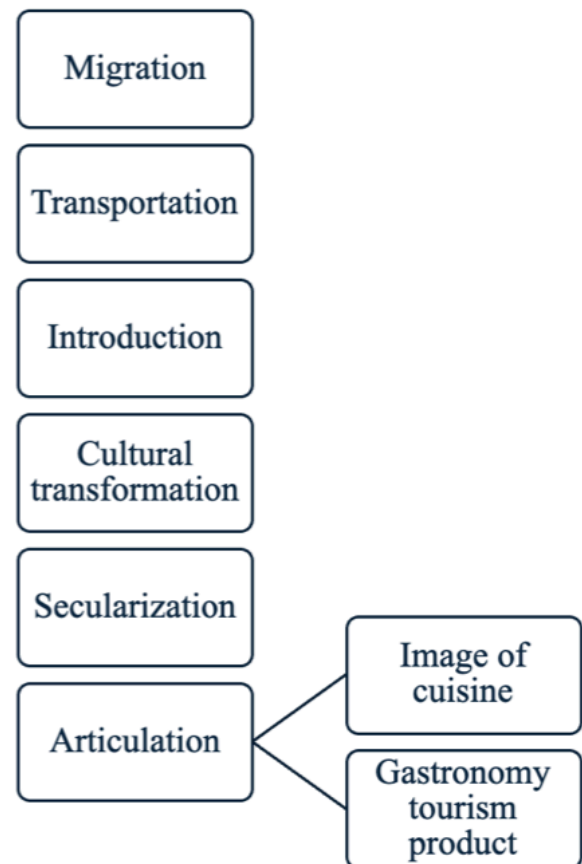
Method

This research encompasses a historical analysis of *boyoz*, stuffed mussels, and *sübye* products, which are integral to the culinary culture of Izmir and have become emblematic of Izmir cuisine. Additionally, the study evaluates these products within the context of gastronomy and tourism. To this end, a qualitative research methodology was employed. Qualitative research is a research methodology that employs qualitative data collection methods, such as observation, document analysis, and interviews, to gain insight into perceptions and events in their natural environment (Karataş, 2017). In this study, secondary data was utilised through the document scanning method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Document scanning involves the analysis of written materials containing information about the phenomenon or cases targeted for investigation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). A comprehensive search was conducted on Google Scholar to identify rel-

evant documents related to the selected studies, utilizing the keywords "boyoz," "bollo," "sübye," "pepita," "midye dolma," and "stuffed mussel" to locate pertinent literature sources. This extensive search was conducted over the period from February to May of 2024. Following the selection of relevant studies, a meticulous cross-referencing process was undertaken to ascertain the full complement of extant literature resources.

Figure 1

The formulation of development food products based on the factors that contribute to the symbolism of cuisine and gastronomic tourism



Secondary data was used to extend the information previously prepared using the cultural transformation formulation for boyoz, stuffed mussels (Uhri, 2015, 2016). In this study, the formulation was expanded to include how they become a symbol of Izmir cuisine and their role in gastronomy tourism and destination branding, with the introduction of a new product, *sübye*. It is important to note that the data, irrespective of the researcher's individual or institutional affiliation, were initially collected by other parties or organizations for their own objectives. These data were thoroughly investigated by integrating elements such as religion and geography. Figure 1 elucidates the formulation developed by Uhri (2015, 2016) and the expansion offered by the author. Uhri (2016) proposed two distinct formulas based upon an examination of ethnic and religious identity, which delineate the manner in which food influences the geographical landscape. These changes can be attributed to both migration and the integration of a particular dish into the cultural fabric of a given society through secularisation. Additionally, the manner in which culinary traditions evolve and become valuable components of the tourism industry was investigated in this study. The food products offered by migrants are not the result of a closed, isolated process; rather, they are created with the intention of sharing them with the broader community. These products are intertwined with the host country, facilitating mutual influence between the host population and the diaspora. The formation of food routes in migration kitchens is contingent on migration, facilitating the transportation of food and the establishment of encounters and acquaintances between the host and the diaspora during their residence in the host country. This process enables migrants to become acquainted with new products available in the host country, in addition to those that accompany their migration. Consequently, these interactions result in the transformation of products of culinary culture,

leading to their secularization and integration into the broader culinary landscape which is summarized with the formulation shown in Figure 1. The increasing cultural and ethnic diversity, a phenomenon facilitated by globalization, has compelled businesses to not only acknowledge the influence of culinary culture but also to understand the cultural identities and preferences of their employees and customers (Andrews et al., 2024; Lazarova et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

Izmir boyozu

Izmir boyozu is a significant culinary symbol of Izmir. It is designated a Turkish geographical indication and is produced by baking a dough prepared with wheat flour, water, and salt until it assumes a rounded shape. The resulting product exhibits a slight caramelization and is characterized by a balance between hardness and softness. The distinctive feature of Izmir boyozu that sets it apart from other bakery products is its evolution over time, which has culminated in its status as a symbol of İzmir culinary culture. This evolution has been shaped by a multitude of factors, including migration, religion, and geography, and has become an integral part of Izmir breakfast tables.

There are various accounts of how the Izmir boyozu reached its present form and took its final shape. In his study, Uhri (2015, 2016) traces the etymology of the term *boyoz* back to its roots in the Spanish language, which was used by the Spanish Jews called Ladino. He then traces the evolution of this language, which was influenced by the immigration of Jewish Spaniards who were sent from Spain in 1492. It was determined that the term *boyoz*, which denotes a round, small bread or bun in Ladino Jewish Spanish, is plural in form “*bollos*” and that its singular form is “*boyo*” (Nişanyan Dictionary, 2024). The name *Bollo*, derived from its ball-like shape, is indicative of the multitude of sophisticated baked goods that were a com-

mon feature of the medieval Sephardic kitchen. (Goldstein, 2000, Marks, 2010). When the Ladino language is subjected to investigation, it becomes evident that Jewish Spaniards migrated to the Aegean coastlines of the Ottoman Empire in 1492 and 1497, following the expulsion of Jewish Spaniards from Spain and Portugal. Consequently, they were designated as Sephardic, denoting their Spanish heritage in the Ladino language (Akbaba & Şenal, 2020; Arslan, 2016; Goldstein, 2000; Marks, 2010; Uhri, 2015; Yıldız, 2020).

Marks (2010) defined the “boyo” as an assortment of fried and baked cheese pastries, made from either flour or bread and explained the consumption as:(...) *Sephardim generally made bread—for much of history an arduous, time-consuming process—only twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays. After a few days, the bread would become stale and innovative cooks would seek ways to utilize it, as nothing was wasted. A favourite of these methods was to soak dry bread in water or milk, season the mixture with cheese and spices, then fry dollops of the batter in hot olive oil, producing a dish called bollos de pan (balls of bread)* (Marks, 2010, p. 125)

The Jewish Sabbath, or Shabbat, is a day of rest and worship. It is a time when Jews are prohibited from working, cooking, lighting a fire, or even turning on an electric switch. Additionally, it is a day when one's immediate family is expected to refrain from work, even if they are of a different religion. After attending synagogue for worship, the family gathers at the table set for them upon their return home. It is customary for food to be prepared before sunset on the day before. The reason for the prevalence of boyozes, fritadas (mücver), borekitas (pogaca), and boiled eggs in Sephardic cuisine is the Shabbat table (Yentürk, 2018). These foods can be prepared on Friday and last the following day, requiring no reheating. It is important to

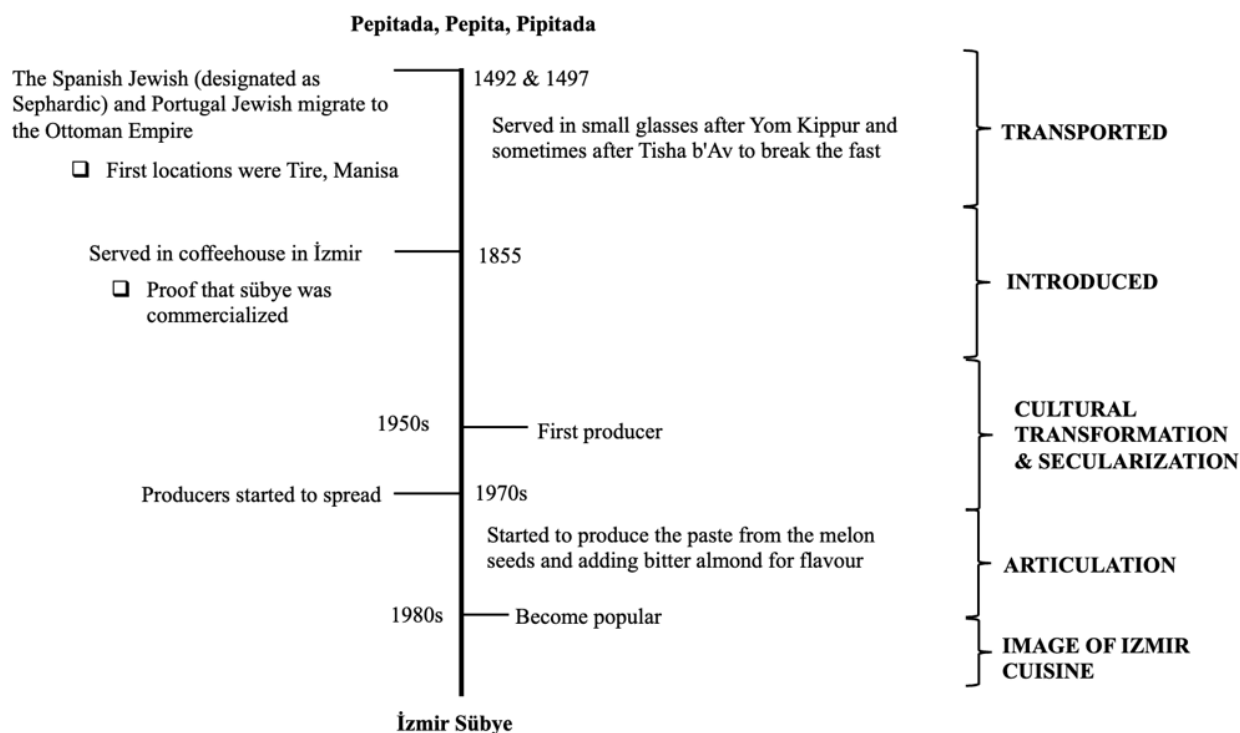
note that the boyoz prepared for Shabbat differs from the Izmir boyoz. While the ingredients are similar for the dough, which includes flour, water, an acidic source, and vegetable oil, there is no yeast present. Instead, the dough contains additional ingredients such as aubergine (handaijo) and cheese as Spanish ingredients, which are also used in Sephardic cuisine (Antebi et al., 2021). Another distinction between the bollos and İzmir boyozu is the preparation techniques employed. In Sephardic cuisine, the dough is expanded by pressing it on each side with the hands, as a rolling pin is not used. Following the migration of the Balkans (Çolak, 2013), who were renowned for their expertise in baking, they began working alongside Sephardics in bakeries. This collaboration led to the development of a faster and more efficient production method for boyoz, which involved the use of a skilfully executed tossing in the air technique. This involved the accomplished baker spinning the exceptionally thin dough in the air, allowing it to form a large air bubble as it fell gently onto the table. The formation of this bubble is a crucial step in the creation of the thin middle layer of phyllo dough. The dough is then stretched to such an extent that it becomes transparent. The phyllo dough is first rolled into a cylindrical shape and then cut vertically into small, round pieces. These are baked in an oven until they are a golden brown and crispy. The result is a caramelized, crispy baking good that is known as an Izmir boyozu. As previously stated, in Sephardic cuisine, bollos is a component of the Sabbath dinner. However, in Izmir cuisine, boyoz assumes a significant role in the breakfast meal. The primary rationale behind the consumption of boyoz in the morning is that the initial production was conducted overnight (Yentürk, 2018) and prepared for sale at the earliest hours of the morning. Consequently, Izmir boyozu is a baked good that is commonly consumed at breakfast. The historical analysis of İzmir boyozu, which demonstrates how religious traditions and customs were secularised

and transformed as a result of interactions with different cultures and religions, is presented in Figure 2. Geographical indications (GIs) are an important aspect of gastronomic tourism, particularly in the context of destination branding.

As illustrated in the figure, the Izmir Boyozu designation was officially registered as a GI in 2017 following an application submitted by the Izmir Chamber of Commerce.

Figure 2

An investigation into the historical and cultural significance of Izmir cuisine, with a particular focus on the Izmir boyozu as a culinary symbol.



Izmir sübye

Sübye is a traditional cold drink from Izmir, prepared with melon seeds, sugar and water (Apan & Zorba, 2018; Bakırcı & Zeyrek, 2017; Yıldız, 2020). It can be consumed as a plant-based beverage for those with lactose intolerance as a milk substitute (Özdemirli & Kamiloğlu Beştepe, 2022). Pepitada is also a beverage made from melon seeds and has its origins in the Middle East, where it was first prepared by Jewish communities. Goldstein (2000) indicated that the liquid produced from melon seeds was also called as *pipitada*. It is a beverage prepared from the saved musk melon seeds in September, when the melons have reached

their maturity (Akbaba & Şenal, 2020). Many Sephardim from Turkey, Rhodes, Crete, and the Balkans prepare it. In Ladino, it is called *pepitada* or *pepita*, which means "pip/little seed" (Marks, 2010). A similar term in Arabic may also be referred to as *soubia*, *soubiya*, or *subiya* (Yıldız, 2020). This may potentially lead to the emergence of a new term in our country, *sübye*. As it is seen from the Figure 3, the traditional beverage of Sephardic cuisine not only transformed in terms of production or consumption habits, the name of the beverage also is undergone a nomenclatural change, shifting from *peptide*, *pepita*, *pipitada* to *sübye*. The act of removing the sübye is used in Arabic cuisine

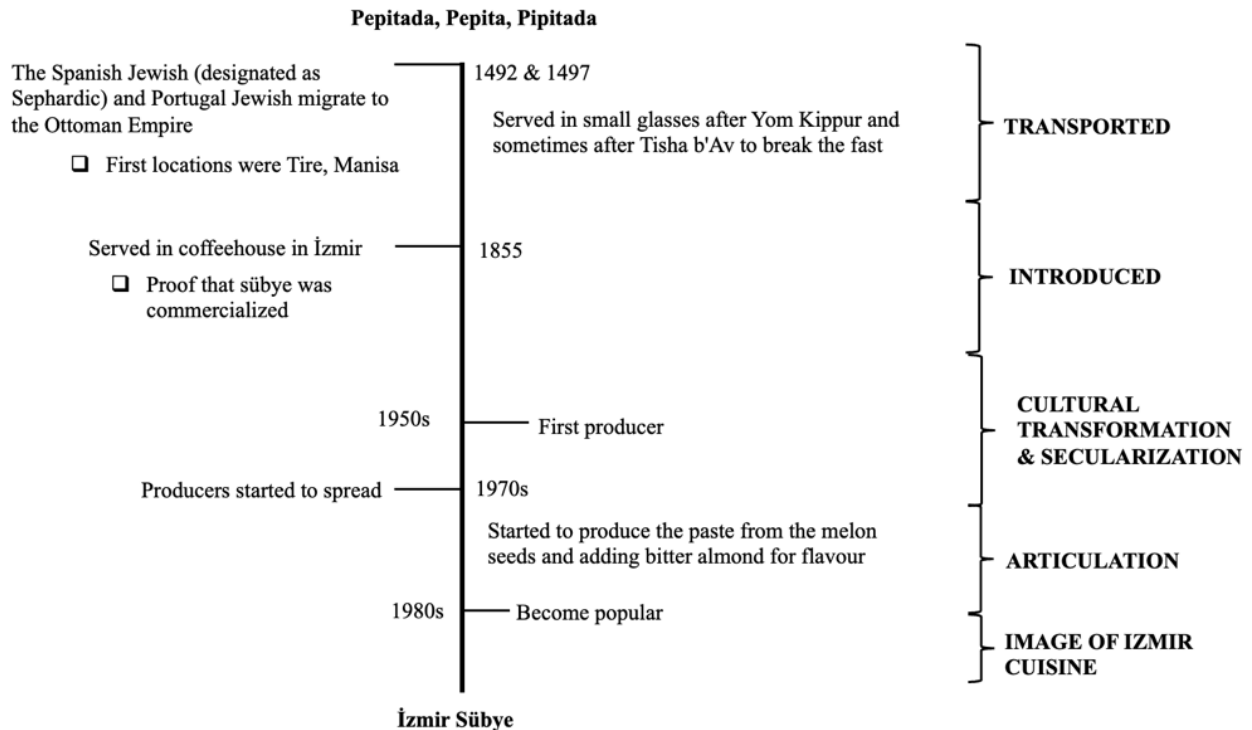
to reveal the rice starch when making pudding from milk. Given that the purpose of the sübye drink is to reveal the whitish milky content of the melon seed, it is possible that it takes its name from Arabic cuisine and expresses the action. In Sephardic cuisine, the melon seeds used in the preparation can be raw or toasted (Antebi et al., 2021). Toasted seeds produce a flavour resembling that of toasted sesame seeds. Pepitada is lightly sweetened with a small quantity of sugar and perfumed with rose water or orange blossom water. A similar beverage in Greek is known as *soumada* or *soumatha*, made from bitter and sweet almonds (Marks, 2010). It should be also noted that sübye is not a beverage like sherbet which is very ancient and popular in Ottoman cuisine due to their preparation

techniques differentiation.

This milk-like sweet drink, whose whiteness symbolises purity, is traditionally served in small glasses after Yom Kippur and sometimes after Tisha b'Av to break the fast (Antebi et al., 2021; Goldstein, 2000; Marks, 2010; Sephardic Sisterhood, 1971; Yentürk, 2018,) Sephardim believe that pepitas coat the stomach, making food more digestible. Unlike Ashkenazim, who usually break their fast with dairy products, Sephardim historically began with pareve items such as pepitada, followed by a light meal of panisicos dulces (sweet buns), reshicas (cracker-like cookies) or other pastries, cookies, and fresh fruit, often followed by a meat dish or fried fish (Marks, 2010).

Figure 3

An investigation into the historical and cultural significance of Izmir cuisine, with a particular focus on the Izmir sübye as a culinary symbol.



In the present era, melon is available throughout the year, which has led to the development of a tradition whereby some families consume pepita as a refreshing beverage during the summer months. A review of the recipes of Sephardic cuisine literature revealed that melon seeds were typically baked prior to processing. This baking was employed for two distinct purposes: to impart flavour by achieving a golden-brown colour, and to accelerate the drying process (Goldstein, 2000; Marks, 2010; Sephardic Sisterhood, 1971). In contrast, the Izmir sübye does not include any baking step in the processes of the preparation (Antebi, 2021). In contrast to the Sephardic recipes, which typically employ rose or orange to flavour the product, the Izmir sübye sometimes includes only bitter almond flavouring (Yentürk, 2018). Although the production of sübye has decreased in recent years, it is still produced in certain locations. In contrast to previous methods, the current production process involves the creation of a base that can last longer by producing a paste from melon seeds, which is then diluted and prepared for sale. (Arpa & Zorba, 2018). The findings were used to inform the historical analysis and evolution of sübye, which is presented in Figure 3.

Izmir midye dolma (stuffed mussel)

One of the most popular street foods in Turkey is stuffed mussels (Günay et al., 2021). This flavour which is widely consumed in Istanbul (Demir et al., 2018) and Izmir (Erdoğan & Özdemir, 2018), has become one of the most sought-after products on the street. Stuffed mussels entered the culinary culture following the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Istanbul. During this period, many seafood dishes became part of our consumption habits and culture. In the first published Turkish cookbook, "Melceü't-Tabbahin (1844-Mehmet Kamil)" (Cooks' Shelter), the stuffed mussel's recipe is described as "Stuffed Mussels" in the "Ninth Chapter - Olive Oil and Stuffed Foods" section (Ayvaz, 2018). During this period, Armenians in Anatolia were

settled in Istanbul and Izmir. As a result of the higher cost of meat, the Anatolian people, who were accustomed to eating meat, were obliged to consume seafood. Armenians, in particular those who had settled on the seashore, transformed the mussels they collected from the sea into an appetising meal by filling them with rice and spices (Çolakoğlu et al., 2022). The first sellers of stuffed mussels were street vendors who sold them in deep aluminium trays on crossed wooden legs (Saygılı et al., 2019). In the last decade, the introduction of regulations regarding street vendors led to the emergence of the mussel house, which became a popular venue for consuming these appetizing morsels. This development initiated a new trend. It can be observed that street vendors contribute to the diversification of culinary cultures by reflecting the ethnic diversity within their ranks. This has led to an increase in the popularity of stuffed mussels from Greek and Armenian vendors, who have traditionally been the main suppliers of this delicacy (Samancı, 2017). Although references to Greeks (Bozis, 2000) and Armenians are made, evidence of stuffed mussels being an Armenian tradition can be found in memoirs (Simyonidis, 2020; Yerasimos, 2014). In 2004, Tovmasyon published a book about her grandmother's culinary traditions and recipes. The book also mentions that stuffed mussels are a special dish, particularly during the Bayram celebrations, and that they are prepared with blackcurrant and pine nuts in Armenian cuisine (Tovmasyon, 2024).

In his 1947 publication, Reşad Ekrem Koçu provided the recipe for stuffed mussels, accompanied by a historical overview of Istanbul's taverns from the 16th century to the early 20th century: *(...) to illustrate, if 100 pieces of stuffed mussels are to be prepared, in addition to 100 large mussels, 200 small inner mussels are purchased. These inner mussels are chopped and incorporated into the blackcurrant and pine nuts filling of the stuffing. The individual con-*

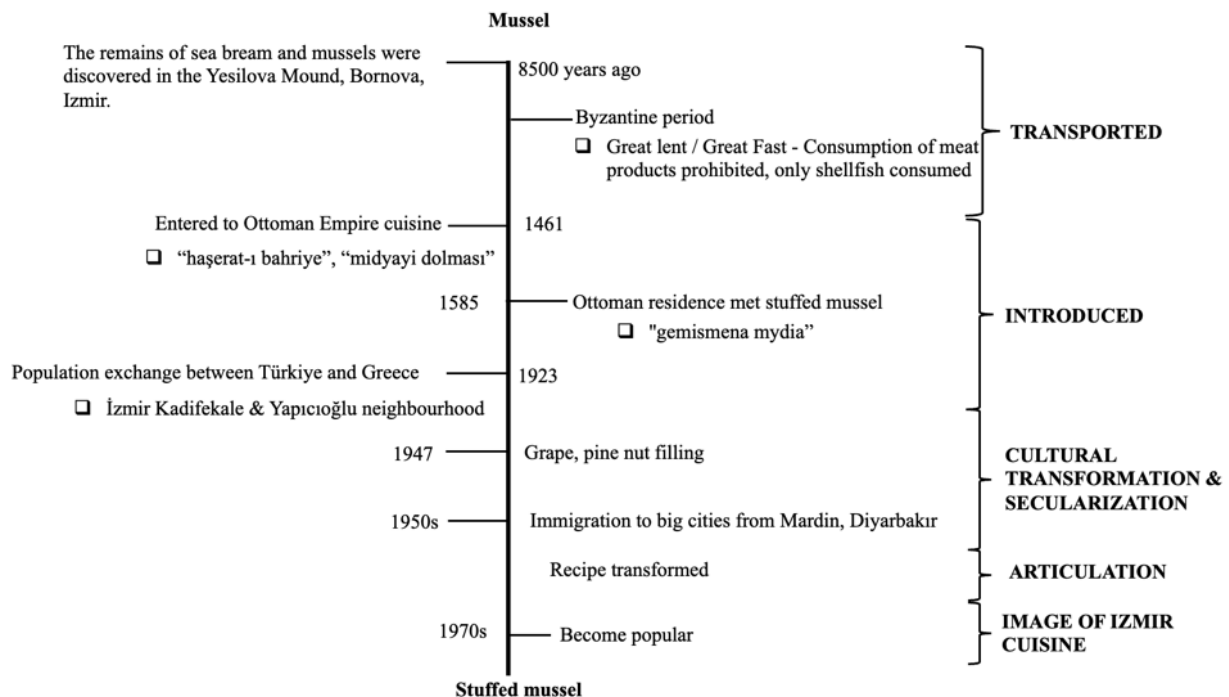
suming the stuffing samples the mussels in the filling, in addition to the two mussel slices on the lid. It is noted that the mussels on the lid and the rice in the filling are not consumed” (Koçu, 2015 p. 42).

As can be discerned from the aforementioned description, until the 1950s, stuffed mussels were prepared with a pilaf stuffed with pine nuts and blackcurrant. Since the 1950s, a migration from the eastern provinces to the west began in Türkiye. Concurrently, people from Mardin settled in Izmir. The inhabitants of Mardin, who

were situated close to Armenians and Greeks in the Kadifakale and Yapıcıoğlu districts of Izmir (Uhri, 2015,2016), acquired the knowledge of how to prepare stuffed mussels from them. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Mardin, who found the sweet taste of ingredients such as blackcurrants and pine nuts unappealing, devised a new recipe utilising their own spices, and stuffed mussels began to be prepared and sold with spices. The findings were used to inform the historical analysis and evolution of stuffed mussels, which is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

An investigation into the historical and cultural significance of Izmir cuisine, with a particular focus on the Izmir stuffed mussel as a culinary symbol.



Conclusion

In recent years, the interaction between tourism and gastronomy has increased rapidly and has become an important aspect of destination branding. In order to create an economic value in gastronomy tourism, it has become important to present the historical evolution and different aspects of the foods that are symbols of culinary culture. This approach ensures not only the preservation of culinary culture but also the economic sustainability of cities. This study examines the relationships between food, ethnicity and religion and the transformation of food into a symbol of culinary culture in a region. The recipes, consumption patterns or consumption times of *boyoz*, stuffed mussels and *sübye*, which are prepared and consumed for different purposes in religions and ethnic origins, are investigated and they are explained how they are transformed through secularisation and become a culinary symbol and a product of gastronomy tourism. One of the key findings of the qualitative research is that Izmir has a wealth of stories to tell through its culinary culture. When Izmir's culinary culture is combined with geographical, historical, religious and other elements, and when gastronomy tourism is added to Izmir's product diversity, tourism revenues increase, thus increasing the region's contribution to both the local and national economy.

The intertwining of culinary heritage and religion is a phenomenon observed throughout history. The connections between these two concepts offer the experience of this combination to both locals and visitors.

In this study, three products belonging to the Izmir culinary culture were examined. There are many more products that have a long history and are included in the culinary culture of Izmir. Nevertheless, further research is required to elucidate the profound interconnections between the concepts of religion and culinary heritage and the implications that may arise from

these connections, as well as the strategies that can be employed to address them.

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