

7772

TASTES FROM PAST TO PRESENT: AMASYA CUISINE

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Abstract

Turkey having different physical and human geographical features has one of the world's most important cuisines. Due to such geographical differences, the materials and quantities that people use during cooking vary from region to region. Thus, each region has its own food culture. Culinary culture of Amasya, which has very different characteristics due to its history, culture and geography, is an important place for the development of gastronomic tourism in Turkey. In this study, it was aimed to create a roadmap for Amasya to make a local food inventory for gastronomic tourism and to be an important place in gastronomic tourism. In the study, the literature was searched and interviews were made with 15 participants determined by purposive sampling method. Dishes belonging to Amasya local cuisine was determined, and a regional food inventory was created. It has been found that Amasya is influenced by past cultures and the geography. In light of the results of the research, gastronomy elements should be added to the content of culture tours which are rich in local foods in Amasya.

Key words: Amasya cuisine, gastronomy tourism, Amasya dishes, local cuisine.

Introduction

Environment, climate conditions, life styles and beliefs play an essential role in the formation of the culture. Foods eaten by the community give us significant clues about culture of the community, since each region has its own taste and food culture. Turkish cuisine is one of the world's great cuisines. The kitchen as a whole and foods take a significant place in the lives of Turkish people who are known for their hospitality. With a long history of 7500 years, Amasya is an exemplary Turkish city in Anatolia in terms of tourism. Amasya, where artifacts can be found from every period with its historical structures, cultural accumulation and the magnificent art elements reaching up to the present day, also creates a unique structure with its literary and folkloric values. It has a rich culinary culture with different tastes from Anatolia (Governorship of Amasya, 2007: 8). It is one of the provinces which has kept the Anatolian traditions and customs until today. Looking at the traditions of Amasya, it is possible to see the subtleties of Turkish Cuisine. During the Ottoman period, Amasya, which served as a school for princes during the Ottoman period, was influenced by various cultures like Hittites, Phrygians, Cimmerians, Scythians, Medes, Persians, Pontus, Romans and Byzantines. Therefore, Amasya is a charming city that can be found in every period with its historical structures, cultural accumulation and magnificent art elements reaching to our day (Governorship of Amasya, 2007: 8). The long history, which dates back to ancient times, has left its traces in Amasya, and traditions of the old civilizations has survived until today. Amasya, aiming to be the capital of Turkish cultural tourism

with its rich cultural and natural heritage spread all over it, is within the scope of the Brand City Project of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Ünsalan et al., 2018: 12).

The province of Amasya is located in the inner part of the Central Black Sea Region. However, since it does not have a seashore, it carries the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the Central Anatolia Region (Governorship of Amasya, 2007: 8-9). A transition climate between the Black Sea climate and the continental climate prevails in Amasya. In the summer, the continental climate is not as rainy as the Black Sea climate. In the winters, the Black Sea climate is not as hard as the continental climate. Summers are hot and dry; winters are also rainy. Spring is the rainiest season. Due to the Black Sea climate and continental climate transition, vegetation shows the characteristics of the two climates (Kaya, 2012: 126). In addition, the transition climate makes the region rich in terms of plant diversity. There is a land, sea and air transportation infrastructure in the region. The city, which is interconnected by historical bridges, is divided into two parts with Yesilirmak, located between two peaks resembling a statue and has the power to influence every guest (Zengin et al., 2014: 5).

Amasya is an ancient settlement which has hosted many civilizations with its long history. With the preservation of these historical values and the revival of new ones, it attracts more tourists in the field of cultural tourism. Therefore, having the potential of gastronomy tourism with its unique cuisine is one of the reasons of preference of tourists in Amasya province (Zengin et al., 2014: 15)). Gastronomy tourism is a type of tourism that is aimed at recognizing different culinary cultures and tastes. The main purpose in such tourism is based on eating and drinking. Therefore, the abundance of eating and drinking diversity raises the potential of this tourism. To the forefront in this field in the world coming from China, Italy, France, are countries like Turkey. The rich food culture of these countries is a major factor in the creation of this potential. Apart from eating and drinking, food tourism is also associated with identity, culture, production, consumption and sustainability issues that are increasingly important (Hall and Mitchell, 2005).

The main determinants of the food culture of a region or province are climatic conditions, historical accumulation of the region and their interaction with other societies. Field crops such as wheat, sugar beet, onion, sunflower and poppies as well as fruit products such as apple, cherry, peach are important agricultural products. Most of these agricultural products are an important source of authenticity of Amasya food culture. Amasya also has an important potential for livestock breeding. Animal products in the province and the use of these products very often in food making provide a significant contribution to the development of food culture. Amasya has hosted many civilizations with different cultures in the historical process. These cultures, which affect each other, have increased and improved the nutritional culture of the region. The existence of people belonging to various branches of the Turkish nation within the borders of the province has contributed to the formation of a unique cuisine in every district, town and village of the province (Yayla and Günay Aktaş, 2017: 232-233).

According to 2017 data, the number of visitors coming for tourism purposes is 615907 (Ünsalan et al., 2018: 17). In the Amasya Province Culture and Tourism Sectoral Action Plan (2014-2023), the potential of Amasya Province has been demonstrated not only in cultural tourism but also in gastronomy tourism (Ünsalan et al., 2018: 21-25). In this context, it is aimed to evaluate the potential of the province in gastronomy tourism. In this study, it is aimed to develop a local food inventory and to create a road map of Amasya, which is an important place for the development of gastronomy tourism.

Method

The research was conducted and conducted in a qualitative pattern. Qualitative research, observation, interview and document analysis, such as qualitative data collection methods are used, perceptions and events in the natural environment in a realistic and holistic way to try to reveal the research

(Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 45). This study was carried out in June-July 2018 in the central district of Amasya. In the scope of the study, 15 people living in Amasya for at least 30 years were interviewed. All participants in the study were women. The data were collected through observations, interviews and documents. For approximately one and a half months each week, volunteers from the local community were observed, which had a total of 645 minutes of meals in six different observations. After the observations, the interviews were made with the participants and the food recipes were collected. The data obtained from the observations and interviews by the researcher were first written in computerized form and then analyzed by using content analysis from qualitative research methods. Participants' recipes have been used in the paper. In order to increase the reliability of the study, an expert analysis was applied and reliability was tried to be taken into consideration considering the common points. Afterwards a regional food inventory was created.

Results

Amasya has found its own unique dishes in the taste, appearance and quality. 15 people were interviewed during the study. As a result of the interviews, there are 8 types of soup, 11 kinds of meat dishes, 14 kinds of vegetable dishes, 14 kinds of pastries, 7 kinds of pilafs and 14 kinds of desserts (Table 1).

Food culture has an important place in the social and cultural life of Amasya. The traditions and customs of the food culture enhance the relations between people and families and strengthen the sharing and help the province to have a strong social unity. One of the best examples of the importance given to table culture in Amasya is the custom of not starting the meal before head of house, the dad. One of the main dishes of Central Asian Turks, Keskek is one of the most important dishes that has survived to the present day and still preserves its originality in Amasya. Another meal that is important in Amasya cuisine is stuffed fava beans. It has been made since the Ottoman period and maintains its originality. Additionally, poems, manas and sayings on food and kitchen in Amasya are other elements that increase the cultural richness of the province. It was found that economy of Amasya based on agriculture. This is one of the main determinants of food culture. When the dishes of Amasya region are examined, it is seen that vegetable dishes and pastries are widely used.

The general characteristics of the Amasya food culture are as follows:

- All the vegetables are served in Amasya food culture. A wide variety of dishes are made from eggplant which has an important place in Amasya food culture. It is said to be at least 20 kinds.
- Pastries have an important place in Amasya's food culture.
- Use of meat and meat products is high. The cooking time of meat dishes (3-5 hours) adds a distinct flavor to the dishes.
- Usually, oil is used in meals. A certain and essential ingredient is essential in the formation of certain flavors.
- Simple rice is not made in Amasya. Pilafs are cooked with vegetables such as noodles, zucchini, eggplant, carrots or dried legumes such as lentils and chickpeas.
- Elma is one of the indispensables of Amasya Cuisine. Apple jam is consumed as breakfast, desserts made from fruits and is used in making compote.

Table 1. Selected Meals from Amasya Cuisine

SOUPS	MEAT DISHES	VEGETABLE DISHES	PASTRIES	PILAFS	DESSERTS
Toyga Soup	Keskek	Stuffed Pods	Sinisu Pie	Pilaf with noodles	Apple Dessert
Catal Soup	Mumbar Iskembe	Eggplant Silkme	Yakasal pie	Lentil Pilaf	Baked rice pudding
Sakala Carpan Soup	Cured Spiced Beef Galle	Eggplant Pehli	Iskefe Pie	Seasoned Rice	Unutma Beni Dessert
Shredded Dough Soup	Lung Roasting with Yoghurt	Eggplant Soup	Poached egg	Pumpkin Pilaf	Cherry Bread
Helle Soup	Whole Meat	Müçver	Amasya Cake	Strained Bulgur Pilaf	Dene Hasudasi
Bidikli Soup	Stewed Dough	Gumbo with meat	Pie with poppy seed and walnut	Eggplant Pilaf	Tirtıl Baklava
Squeezing Tarhana Soup	Quince Galle	Roasted Beans	Hengel	Pilaf with Vermicelli	Kalburabasti
Kidney Bean Soup	Singir Kebab	Purslane meal	Oily Dough (Katmer)		Kuymak
	Kipe	Onion yuvalama	Kete		Hosmerim
	Liver wrapping	Madimak	Cizlak		Amasya Teltel (Cotton Candy)
	Juicy Meatball	Beet meal	Pisi		Gomlek Kadayif
		Bat meal	Bread Vaccine (Papara)		Yoka Dessert
		Borani (a vegetable dish with yogurt and rice)	Dondurme		Paluze
		Eggplant Pickle Cilbir	Gombe		Sugar Rolls

Amasya dishes are adequate and balanced when evaluated in terms of healthy nutrition. Different food groups are used in food and balanced nutrition is provided in this way. The condition that can be considered to be inconvenient in terms of health is the frequent use of oil frying in the construction

of the dishes. Amasya is one of the provinces with high agricultural potential in terms of land existence and variety of crops. The diversity in climate and soil structure also creates diversity in agricultural products. Field crops such as cereals, sugar beets, onions, sunflowers and poppies are common. However, Amasya is more known for its fruits. Apple and cherry are the products that have been grown and produced with best quality in Amasya. Especially high quality cherry production for foreign markets has become widespread in Amasya; approximately 10% of Turkey's cherry production has become covered from Amasya. Within the scope of Amasya International Atatürk Culture and Art Activities which is organized every year, Cherry Promotion Competition is held as well.

Conclusion

In light of the results of the research, gastronomy elements have to be added to the content of culture tours which are rich in local foods in Amasya. However, there is not enough organization (festival, event etc.) for the use of the meals in the scope of gastronomy tourism. In addition to this, it was observed that all of these local dishes were not on the menu of most of the restaurants in Amasya. Since the local dishes did not receive too much demand from the public on a regular basis. Therefore restaurant owners removed Amasya's local meals from their menus.

The tourists who come to Amasya for cultural tourism stay 1 or 2 days in the province, and mostly they visit the city during daytime. Considering that the stay duration of the tourists is short and the day-eaters eat a meal, it is seen that local dishes are not preferred much in this short time period.

As a result of the researches and interviews conducted, it is determined that Amasya cuisine has a rich potential. However, there are deficiencies in the marketing of the dishes that come to the fore in Amasya cuisine.

In this direction:

- An area in the city should be established for the promotion of Amasya local products.
- Local food should be brought to the fore and should be provided in the menu of the restaurants in the province.
- Within the scope of gastronomy tourism, TV programs should be prepared, and effective use of social media should be ensured.
- In the case of visits to Amasya, the contents of gastronomic tourism should be included within the scope of travel agencies' program.
- The number of organizations such as festivals and events should be increased, and gastronomic products should be emphasized in these organizations.
- Provincial food and gastronomic products should be introduced with participation in the fairs. And it should be open to observation and application of the fair visitors.
- Famous chefs and gourmets should be invited to participate in newspapers, TV and magazines.

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