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The Unique Heritage of Anatolia: Turkish Cuisine ^[1]

Countries that seek to strengthen their global image, increase their reputation and create their own brands opt for engaging in dialogue through cuisine today . The phenomenon of food is an essential communication tool as it shapes social perceptions and practices, and builds social relationships .

Since the discovery of this potential, many states have integrated gastrodiplomacy activities into their diplomatic efforts. Numerous countries that value the permanent cultural interactions and economic benefits that gastrodiplomacy promises have begun to invest in this field.

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The Turkish cuisine, which has rich content and the potential to become a global brand, took its place among the cuisines that reflect their unique cultures as the most effective and delectable tool of diplomacy. Türkiye has been enhancing its efforts in the field of cultural diplomacy over the past two decades by combining its ancient culture and civilization with the unique geographical beauty of Anatolia. With its gastronomic identity, which can unite diverse culinary cultures thanks to its geographical location and climate, Türkiye has made gastrodiplomacy one of the most significant elements of its soft power.

A country's cuisine reflects its national identity, character and even the essence of its civilization. Turkish cuisine is also strongly associated with Anatolia, which is home to numerous civilizations with a well-known 10,000-year history, where important empires have ruled, and where a large number of ethnic groups have lived, resulting in a very diverse cultural mosaic. When Asian, Mesopotamian, Mediterranean, African, and European foods are combined with products that grow on fertile Anatolian lands suitable for producing a wide variety of foods, rich and delicious Turkish cuisine emerges, which is literally a fusion cuisine.

The richness of Turkish cuisine, which has been shaped throughout history as a result of geographical migrations, interactions with different civilizations and cultural rapprochements, derives not only from the variety of its products but also from the fact that it serves as a means of expressing living culture. The diversity of Turkish cuisine is an expression of the

amity and the art of coexistence among the various cultures, religions and ethnic groups in Türkiye. Therefore, it is evident that Türkiye's desire for peace and tolerance can be easily deduced from its culinary practices.

In addition, food has meanings in Turkish culture that extend far beyond merely satiating hunger. In the Turkish culture, food serves as a healing agent. With recipes that utilize all ingredients, Turkish cuisine is by nature waste-free and sustainable. Dishes made with no waste materials and tables stocked with healing delicacies like vinegar and pickles made from waste materials highlight the Turkish culinary tradition that protects biodiversity and is environmentally sustainable. The ability to transform the remaining products into completely different dishes, which is one of the most important features of Turkish cuisine, is an important solution to the global food loss problem today. Waste-free, ecological and sustainable Turkish cuisine, with its healthy preservation and cooking techniques, is a life guide for a person to get to know their own body and decipher the codes of their corporeality, as well as a solution to the global health issues of the present day.

When all of this is considered, there is no doubt that Türkiye deserves to be regarded as one of the culinary centers of the world. Clearly, based on thousands of years of experience, Turkish cuisine has the potential to become the world's leading cuisine with its diverse offerings. Its heritage is a unique means of strengthening the country's image and accurately expressing itself.

Aiming at promoting the cultural richness of Turkish cuisine to the global public, "Turkish Cuisine Week" is celebrated in Türkiye and abroad from May 21st-27th. As part of this event, under the auspices of the Presidency and under the coordination of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with a theme determined annually, the most delicious dishes of Türkiye are exhibited with all their original qualities and unique features in 81 provinces and the Republic of Türkiye's embassies, consulates, consultancies and representative offices abroad. During the Turkish Cuisine Week events, dishes are prepared using local ingredients and traditional cooking techniques, and guests can sample all aspects of Turkish cuisine with menus reflecting ancient and sustainable Turkish cuisine, as well as products associated with Turkish culture such as Turkish coffee, Turkish tea, and Turkish delights.

Aside from the events of this historic week, the ancient Turkish cuisine is making an international name for itself through ongoing efforts such as the book "Turkish Cuisine with Timeless Recipes," pioneered by First Lady Emine Erdoğan, which is on the shelves of bookstores in Türkiye and abroad, with its approach and unique recipes that leave a mark not only on the past and tradition but also on the future.

Turkish Cuisine Week, one of the most comprehensive gastrodiploamacy events in recent years, is the most effective way to showcase Turkish cuisine with its traditional recipes, healthy and waste-free tables, and timeless identity, as well as the mentality and teaching behind it, by utilizing the opportunities offered by gastrodiploamacy.
