

Efímerída #02

The Road Home | Istanbul



READ ALL
ABOUT IT

*We bought half
the bazaar.*

*Europe on one side,
Asia on the other.*

Ten years in, the founders of Brother Marcus went back to where the food began.

Two days in Istanbul. A Black Sea breakfast, baklava rolled by hand, offal over charcoal, a ferry between two continents, and a supper club above the city. This is what they found.



DISPATCH ONE • THE FIRST DAY

Day One, on the water

Breakfast in Istanbul is not a dish. It is a table. We began at Limon Kahvaltı Evi, up in Firuzağa, where the spread arrived in pieces and kept arriving: ripe tomatoes, cucumber, olives, warm bread, honey and clotted cream, and kuymak, the molten Black Sea cornmeal and cheese that refuses to sit still on a spoon. Tea, never coffee. That is the rule here, and we kept it. A cat climbed onto Alex's lap and stayed for the whole meal, which we chose to take as a good sign.



Kuymak at Limon Kahvaltı Evi.

Then Karaköy Güllüoğlu, three generations deep in baklava. The kitchen runs like a heist film: rolling pins they call oklavas, a star on the wall for every decade of service, two tonnes a day and every sheet of it rolled by hand. You eat it upside down, they told us, so the syrup finds your tongue first. They finish with sheep's milk butter, and the recipe came home from Mecca, picked up on the hajj generations ago and left well alone since.

“Breakfast is not a dish here. It is a table.”

Tea, never coffee.



Kokoreç over charcoal at Kral Kokoreç.

Dönerci Şahin Usta is famous, and the meat was good, but the bread let it down, so we pressed on with no hard feelings. At the Mısır Çarşısı, the Spice Bazaar, we found an Ottoman blend worth carrying, and then, showing no restraint at all, bought half the shop.

Kral Kokoreç came next. Offal turned over charcoal, chopped fine and packed into a terracotta güveç, oregano and Aleppo on top, a glass of şalgam to cut through it. We were firmly told not to touch the rice-stuffed mussels. One of us ate one anyway, in the full spirit of the thing. The güveç was an absolute stonker.

Then the water. We crossed the Bosphorus by ferry, Europe on one bank and Asia on the other, still the cheapest beautiful thing in the city. On the far side, Liman Karaköy, run by a man aptly named Liman, a nurse who lost his job in the pandemic and now turns out the best balık dürüm we found, pomegranate molasses and all, the Hagia Sophia sitting on the skyline behind him.

We bought half the bazaar.

DISPATCH TWO • THE SECOND DAY

Day Two, and the supper club

Day two began in a taxi across the morning chaos, where the drivers take cash and not card and the traffic moves like a rumour. We climbed to Beyoğlu and the Kulaksız Pazarı, a market of purslane and vine leaves and tomatoes still on the branch, on streets swept spotless. Next door, Kulaksız Merkez Börekçisi, börek under a dust of icing sugar.



The Kulaksız market, swept spotless.

At Görele Pide, a man who has worked the same warped pine counter for forty years turned out boat-shaped pides. A photograph of him as a dapper teenager watched from the wall. Bellies full and bags heavy, we jumped in a taxi and went to deliver the supper club.



Forty years at the counter, Görele Pide.



The supper club menu at Soho House.

The supper club was at Soho House, in the Palazzo Corpi, a grand old mansion in Beyoğlu that spent the better part of a century as the American embassy and was, so the story goes, won at a card table in a single hand of poker. Oren, our development chef, had flown out ahead of us to run the Turkish brigade, and we found him over the pass, laughing, entirely at home. Turkish coffee with the head chef, Özgür, and then the clock sped up.

Eight courses, all of it built from what we had carried out of the bazaar that week. Prawn skewers in burnt butter with the blend. Black Sea trout laid on kefir with nigella and sorrel. Baklava we had watched being made that same morning, sandwiched around kaymak ice cream. The last fish went out, a cold Efes went round the pass, and that was that.

The road, on a plate, and then home.

Won at a hand of poker.

Istanbul: The Flavour Trail

The road we walked, and the road we'd send you.

ON THE ROAD • WHAT WE FILMED

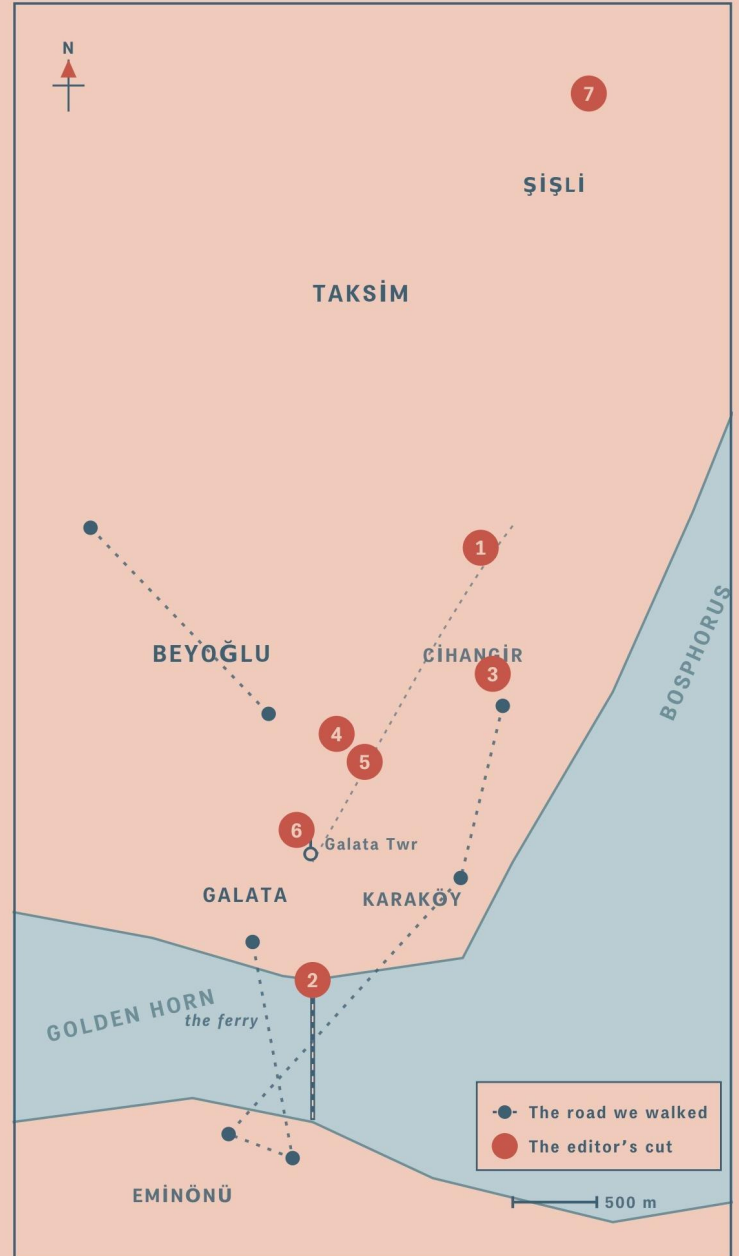
- **Limon Kahvaltı Evi** the breakfast table.
- **Karaköy Güllüoğlu** baklava, three generations deep.
- **Mısır Çarşısı** the Spice Bazaar.
- **Kral Kokoreç** offal over charcoal.
- **Liman Karaköy** balık dürüm on the water.
- **Görelle Pide** forty years at the counter.
- **Soho House** the supper club.

OFF THE RECORD • THE EDITOR'S CUT

- 1 **Zübeyir Ocakbaşı** fire and meat, Taksim.
- 2 **Üstad** a beer above the Galata Bridge.
- 3 **Cihangir Manticısı** mantı, on Oren's word.
- 4 **Bilice Kebab** trays beaten by hand.
- 5 **Yeni Lokanta** the original.
- 6 **Federal, Galata** the flat white.
- 7 **Mahir Lokantası** proper Anatolian, Şişli.

What we carried home

From the Spice Bazaar we built a blend of our own, pink peppercorn, sumac and Aleppo, and back in London it seasons the prawn skewers, burnt butter and all.



Beyoğlu, Galata and across the Horn: every stop where it really stands.

WATCH THE SERIES

The road, on film.

Four short films from Istanbul and Athens. The breakfast tables, the market stalls, the charcoal counters and the long suppers we came home still talking about. Scan the code to watch the whole series.



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