



The Gastronomy of İzmir: A Culinary Route

Discovering the Pearl of the Aegean
through its Street Food, History, and
Legends.

A curated guide for the gastronomic explorer.

A Kitchen of Migrations

Izmir is not just a city; it is a melting pot of cultures. The cuisine is a living history of migration, blending 500 years of Sephardic Jewish heritage, the fresh herbs of Cretan immigrants, and deep-rooted Turkish traditions.

Here, street food is a religion, breakfast is a non-negotiable ritual, and olive oil is the foundation of life.



The Morning Ritual: Boyoz



The Origin Story

The name derives from the Spanish "**Bollos**" (small loaves). Brought to İzmir by Sephardic Jews fleeing Spain in 1492, this unleavened pastry remains a city signature long after the community has largely emigrated.

The Dish & Ritual

A flaky, oily dough similar to mille-feuille, made with flour, oil, and **tahini**. It is almost mandatory to eat it with a hard-boiled egg and hot tea.

Where to Eat

Alsancak Dostlar Fırını: The definitive spot on Kıbrıs Şehitleri Cd. Try the classic plain version or variations like spinach, tahini, and eggplant.

25 Saat Gece Boyozcusu: For the late-night crowd.

Don't Call it Simit: Gevrek & The Cold Kumru



The Distinction:

In İzmir, it is 'Gevrek,' not simit. The difference lies in the process: Gevrek is molasses-dipped and baked twice, making it crispier and thinner than its Istanbul counterpart.



The 'Cold' Kumru:

A breakfast staple. The sesame-covered 'Kumru' bread is served cold, filled with crumbly 'İzmir Tulum' cheese, tomato, and fresh green pepper.

The Address: Tarihi Zeynel Ergin Gevrek Fırını (Konak)

An institution. A stone-oven bakery where you get the authentic, crispy experience. Ideally paired with tea in their small café.

The Street King: Hot Kumru

The Dish:

Named after the “dove” shape of the bread. A hot sandwich packed with grilled sucuk (spicy sausage), salami, sausage, and melting Kaşar cheese. Often topped with ketchup and mayonnaise.

Local Tip:

Described as “dirty but delicious”—the ultimate comfort food.



The Addresses:

- **Kumrucu Ömür (Karşıyaka):** Fast service, quality charcuterie.
- **Kardeşler Büfe (Alsancak):** Famous for hot kumru and mixed sandwiches.
- **Kumrucu Hikmet (Alaçatı):** Try the ‘Çılgın’ (Crazy) variety with Sayas cheese.
- **Kumrucu Hüseyin (Ilıca):** Serving since 1966, using old cheddar and Tire sucuk.
- **Asucan (Çeşme):** Famous for the “Atom”—coleslaw and schnitzel in a kumru bun.

The Art of Offal: Kokoreç



The Technique

Playfair Display

Unlike the minced version common elsewhere, **İzmir Kokoreç** is **grilled over charcoal** and sliced into large **rings** or “**medallions**” to preserve the juiciness and **aroma**. It is served with cumin and spices in bread.

The Addresses

- **Asım Usta (Bornova)**: A legend. His kokoreç is so revered it appears on fine-dining menus in Istanbul.
- **Kokoreççi Baki (Karşıyaka)**: Known for juicy, soft meat that requires no secondary cooking; taken straight from the skewer to the bread.
- **Kartal Kokoreç (Bornova)**: Ranked top 3 in Turkey; known for a slightly fattier, rich cut.

For the Brave & The Gourmet: Söğüş

The Dish:

Cold cuts of boiled sheep head—specifically the brain, tongue, and cheek. Served in lavash bread with plenty of fresh greens, onions, and spices.

The Context:

Originally from Niğde but perfected in İzmir. It acts as both a main course or a recovery meal found in the historic markets.



The Addresses:

- **Söğüşçü Cimbom** (Kemeraltı): A historic, tiny shop in the heart of the bazaar. The most authentic experience.
- **Meşhur Hisarönü Söğüşçüsü**: Serving since 1975 in the market district.

The Local Table: İzmir Köfte & Esnaf Lokantas

The Concept:

'**Esnaf Lokantası**' (Tradesmen Restaurants) have no printed menus. You choose freshly cooked dishes from a glass display. Open for lunch, closed by evening.

The Signature Dish:

İzmir Köfte—meatballs baked with potato wedges and green peppers in a savory tomato sauce.



The Addresses:

- **Adil Müftüoğlu - Uğur Lokantası:** Serving since the 1960s. The definitive spot for İzmir Köfte.
- **Bizim Lokanta (Kemeraltı):** Famous for unique soups like Duck Soup or Fish Soup.
- **Mahmut Usta & Abbasın Yeri:** Reliable, high-quality traditional Aegean home cooking.

The Bounty of the Aegean: Fish & Meze

The Vibe:

Dining involves a table full of shared mezes (appetizers) followed by grilled seasonal fish.



The Addresses:

- **Deniz Restoran (Kordon):** White tablecloths, classic service. Famous for milk-poached fish.
- **Boğaziçi Restaurant (Balçova):** Located on a pier over the sea. Famous for 'Levrek Lokum' (Sea Bass Delight).
- **Yengeç Restoran (Urla):** Creative stone-building venue. Try the 'Levrek Simit' and glazed calamari.
- **Ferhat Büfe (Güzelbahçe):** Casual spot specializing only in Sardines.

Aegean Greens & Fermented Cheeses



The Green Gold: **Şevketi Bostan** (Blessed Thistle)

A distinct Aegean root vegetable, served stewed (with lamb or plain) with a lemon-flour sauce.

The Cheese: **Kopanisti**

A fermented, spicy, spreadable cheese made from goat/sheep milk. It has a pungent kick similar to Roquefort.

The Addresses:

- İzmir Girit Lokantası or Kısmet Lokantası for the best herb dishes.
- Village Markets (Karaburun/Urla) for buying authentic Kopanisti.

Sweet Finales: The Bomb & The Classic



The Viral Hit: İzmir Bombası

A thin, cookie-like dough that explodes with fluid chocolate spread upon the first bite.

Where: Çelebi Unlu Mamüller (The origin of the craze).

The Traditional: Şambali

A dense semolina cake made with milk and sugar (no eggs/flour), topped with peanuts. Harder and more intense than Revani.

Where: Meşhur Hisarönü Şambalıcısı (Kemeraltı). Served on paper, sometimes with "kaymak" (clotted cream).



Unique Aromas: Mastic & Sübye



The Scent of Chios: Damla Sakızı (Mastic)

The resinous gum from the Chios trees across the water flavors cookies and ice cream.

Where: Alaçatı Kurabiyecisi for Mastic Cookies.

The Drink: Sübye

Another Sephardic legacy. A refreshing, milky-white drink made from dried melon seeds, water, and sugar.

Where: Alsancak Dostlar Fırını or street vendors in the old city.

Coastal Rituals: Midye Dolma



The Experience

Stuffed mussels (rice, spices, pine nuts) eaten by the dozen, often sitting on the grass at the Kordon waterfront.

The Twist: Enginarlı Midye (Artichoke Mussels)

A specialty found in Ildır, where the rice mix includes local artichokes.

The Addresses

- **Serkan Hamza (Balçova):** Famous for serving them hot and fresh.
- **Ildır Family Stall:** For the artichoke variety (look for the mobile cart).

The Curator's Cheat Sheet: By District



Kemeraltı (The Old City)

- Lunch: Esnaf Lokantas (Mahmut Usta)
- Snack: Söğüş (Cimbom)
- Sweet: Şambali (Hisarönü)



Alsancak / Kordon (The Center)

- Breakfast: Boyoz (Dostlar)
- Dinner: Fish (Deniz Restoran)
- Fast Food: Hot Kumru (Kardeşler)



Karşıyaka (Across the Bay)

- Fast Food: Kokoreç (Baki) & Kumru (Ömür)



Urla / Çeşme / Alaçatı (The Escape)

- Dinner: Yengeç Restoran
- Treat: Mastic Cookies & Ice Cream

Aegean Editorial

A glass of Turkish tea (çay) sits on a wooden pier, with a city skyline visible in the background under a sunset sky. The tea is dark red and steaming slightly. The pier is made of dark wooden planks. The background shows a body of water reflecting the sunset colors, with a city skyline in the distance under a sky of orange, pink, and purple.

Afiyet Olsun

İzmir is a city where you don't eat to live; you live to eat.

Content adapted from Gezinomi & Local Guides.