

Cultural Memory of Azerbaijani Cuisine: Documentation of Forgotten Flavors¹

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Abstract

Azerbaijan is a country with a rich cultural heritage, heavily reliant on tourism as a significant part of its economy. Despite being a well-known tourist destination in the 1980s, the tourism sector suffered due to the war, and it began to recover in the 2000s, becoming a popular tourist destination once again. However, for the country to transform into a more recognized and preferred tourist destination, it needs to focus on various types of alternative tourism. Among these alternatives, gastronomic tourism stands out due to the richness of Azerbaijani cuisine. The primary characteristic of Azerbaijani cuisine is its diversity, stemming from significant interaction with surrounding regional cuisines. Nevertheless, despite possessing such a variety, Azerbaijani cuisine is not fully recognized, as only the similarities with other cuisines are emphasized, leading to a lack of proper attention towards this cuisine. The absence of any research regarding forgotten dishes among the local population has necessitated this study. Thus, this research aims to identify the culinary culture of Azerbaijan, uncover forgotten dishes, and, depending on the methodology of the research, conduct interviews to establish and document recipes related to Azerbaijani cuisine. In this context, interviews were conducted with local residents in Azerbaijan, relevant literature was reviewed, and sources related to Azerbaijani cuisine were evaluated, paying detailed attention to it. Subsequently, recipes were identified from each category, prepared, recorded on video, and access to these videos was facilitated through QR codes.

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1. Introduction

One of the examples of traditional material culture is food and drink. The acquisition of food and beverages is as ancient as human societal history. In other words, since the day humans began to know themselves and their surroundings, they have strived to obtain food for survival. Using the natural products of nature, a culture encompassing various stages of production economy, including culinary culture, has been created. Over time, every nation living in different geographies has developed a unique and diverse range of foods and beverages based on the tested experiences and empirical knowledge of previous years and centuries, cooking technologies, kitchen equipment, table etiquettes, etc. With socio-economic development, this process has been significantly influenced by traditions, religious rules, landscape and climate characteristics, proximity to transit routes and shopping centers, as well as ethnic and cultural ties with neighboring nations. The fact that the national ethnic characteristics of each nation or ethnic group are more pronounced in culinary culture today is not coincidental (Seçim and Kaya, 2020).

The unique Azerbaijani cuisine has contributed to the increase in tourist flow to Azerbaijan in recent years. Azerbaijani cuisine is one of the oldest, richest, and most delicious cuisines in the world. One of the crucial factors in the development of Azerbaijani cuisine is climate. The diversity of climate in Azerbaijan has led to a richness in flora and fauna. The availability of fresh vegetables and fruits throughout the year, whether used alone or in conjunction with other natural foods, has enriched Azerbaijani cuisine. Azerbaijani cuisine has a history as deep as that of Azerbaijan itself. From the kitchen tools used, the methods and diversity of cooking, to the variety of ingredients and products, traditions, special days, ceremonies, and dining etiquette, Azerbaijani cuisine is quite unique. This uniqueness is mainly driven by the diversity of the country's natural and geographical conditions and the richness of flora and fauna, which has led to the emergence and formation of a wide variety of foods and beverages, predominantly unique to Azerbaijan. It is not coincidental that each region of Azerbaijan has its own distinct varieties of food and drink (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2016). Azerbaijan is the only country in the world that has added a separate article (Article 1.37) to its Culture Law regarding the preservation of its national culinary heritage. Thus, culinary legislation has been recognized as a cultural value for the first time (Amiraslanov, 2021).

2. Azerbaijani Cuisine

The abundance of various foods belonging to the same type is noteworthy in Azerbaijani cuisine. This applies to salads, desserts, soups, pastries, and meat dishes. Dishes made with pastries and meat constitute the main menu of Azerbaijani cuisine. It is observed that olive oil dishes are not typically prepared in Azerbaijani cuisine. Instead, cooking is done with corn oil, sunflower oil, butter, and tail fat. In rural areas, bread is baked in tandoors. Three meals are consumed daily. Eggs, tea, cheese, butter, various types of bread, jams, dairy products, pastries, and sometimes sheep's head soup are consumed for breakfast. Azerbaijanis generally drink tea before meals. Tea prepares the stomach for digestion until food is served. Drinking tea is a beautiful custom known for creating mutual intimacy among people in hospitality. Special teas are also prepared with ginger and cinnamon. Azerbaijan is rich in rare mineral waters. There are healing mineral waters such as "Turşsu," "İstisu," "Sirab," and "Darıdag" (Ahmedof, 2001). Coffee is consumed less frequently. Tea is served at any desired time of the day with sweets, jams, and pastries. Tea tables are prepared with great care. When guests arrive, the offerings begin with black tea, followed by meals and concluding with tea again. Along with tea, jams, desserts, cakes, pastries, cookies, and fruits are served. For meal service, soups, grilled meats, rice, and stuffed dishes are provided. Yogurt and salad are also offered to aid the digestion of fatty foods. Fruit juices and compotes are served with meals. In Azerbaijani cuisine, foods are also utilized for public health. In cases of colds, digestive disorders, and respiratory illnesses, particularly soups and other dishes are noted for their healing properties (Sarışık, 2019).

In Azerbaijan, those who prepare food are called "ashbaz." Dishes are named according to their preparation styles. Names like "sıkma," "dolma," "süzme," "bastırma," and "bulama" indicate the method of preparation, or in other words, the path taken to make them. Some dish names derive from their shapes. Dishes such as "Lüle Kebab," "Dini-Dili Küfte," and "Yaprak Hıngal" fall into this category. Additionally, there are various dishes made from both beef and poultry, as well as game meats. Different types of fish dishes are prepared along the Caspian Sea. The oldest identifiable dishes of Azerbaijani cuisine include "haşıl," "umaç," "hengel," "düşbere," and "erişte," which are types of pastries and meat dishes. The first bread museum in the world was opened in the city of Aghdam, located in the Karabakh region. This museum showcases all varieties of ancient and contemporary bread (Bayramlı, 2013).

Culinary culture has a history as profound as that of Azerbaijan itself. From the kitchen tools used to the methods and diversity of cooking, the variety

of ingredients, and the traditions and customs surrounding special days and ceremonies, Azerbaijani cuisine is significant. Enhancing the potential for its evaluation in gastronomic tourism is crucial for promoting Azerbaijani culinary culture and attracting interest. To achieve this, it is essential to focus on promoting products that are palatable and acceptable to various cultures without being overly challenging to their taste preferences. Satisfied tourists who have had the experience they expected can return home content. This will significantly benefit Azerbaijan's re-selection and promotion. Gastro-tourists are inclined to taste all regional dishes during their subsequent visits due to their previous positive experiences. Education, certification, legal protection, regulations, standard recipes, and the use of written, visual, and social media for promotions are vital for increasing satisfaction levels, meeting expectations, and offering authentic regional flavors. This way, the culinary culture can be preserved and passed down from tradition to future generations (Atilla, 2013).

In the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, there was a famous chef named Horozoglu who prepared piti in Sheki. People from various regions of Azerbaijan would come to Sheki to eat the "Piti" he made. The Sheki piti is primarily prepared from the boneless meat of black sheep and uses saffron to provide a pleasant color and aroma. Since the piti has also been traditionally cooked in Southern Azerbaijan (in Tabriz) in the same manner, they rightfully consider this dish a national dish of Azerbaijan. Spices such as saffron, cire, anise, cumin, bay leaves, coriander seeds, mint, dill, parsley, celery, tahini, basil, thyme, etc., are abundantly used in dishes. Saffron is cultivated in the Absheron Peninsula. In Azerbaijani cuisine, saffron is added to over 50 dishes and more than 10 types of sweets (Gökyıldız, 2010).

In Azerbaijani culture, special dishes are prepared on certain holidays and occasions, and special tables are set. "Special day and holiday dishes" exhibit great diversity in Azerbaijani cuisine. On Nevruz, "Semeni" is prepared; when a child's first tooth comes in, "Hedik" is made; and on the festival of Hızır Nebi, "Kavut" is prepared. Additionally, as a tradition from the past, various dishes are made on important days such as engagements, weddings, births, deaths, and circumcisions. According to written sources, the Nevruz festival emerged in 505 BC. In the works of poet Nizamulmülk in "Siyaset," Omar Khayyam in "Novruzname," and other poets and writers, Nevruz is emphasized as one of the most celebrated festivals by the people. In Nizami Ganjavi's poem "Iskendername," the invitation of Iskender by Nushaba during the Nevruz festival and the offerings around the festive fire, reflecting various Nevruz traditions, highlight the special importance given to this festival. In Azerbaijan, each region prepares its specific varieties of pilaf during the Nevruz festival. The dishes prepared for guests who come to celebrate are

served. The Nevruz table features shakarbura, baklava, shorgogal, and other region-specific sweets, Nevruz candies, semeni, dyed eggs, and various nuts. Home-made sherbets and compotes made from dried fruits are served as beverages. During the Nevruz festival in Azerbaijan, visits to cemeteries are made. Eggs, semeni, and sweets are brought to the cemetery and placed on graves. The prepared foods are distributed to everyone for the soul of the deceased. Flour halva is prepared and wrapped in lavash for one person, and taken to the cemetery. It is distributed to everyone encountered from the entrance of the cemetery. Those who receive the halva say “May Allah accept it” as they eat it. For engaged girls, gifts known as “honça” in Azerbaijani Turkish containing a tray of baklava, a tray of shakarbura, a tray of shorgogal, semeni, dyed eggs, and sweets are sent by the male side. At weddings and circumcisions, drinks, kebabs, pilaf, dolmas, and cold dishes are prepared. Nevruz is celebrated differently in Azerbaijan. With the arrival of this festival, special containers in every home are prepared to sprout wheat and barley. The sprouted wheat is called “Semeni,” symbolizing the arrival of Nevruz. In Azerbaijan, special seed wheat for Semeni is selected and separated 10-15 days before Nevruz. The wheat is soaked in water, placed in special dishes, and covered with a cloth made of “Renzif” to keep it moist. They ensure the wheat remains wet by occasionally soaking it, preventing it from drying out. Thus, the wheat cracks and sprouts, growing taller. This tradition related to Semeni has been preserved in Azerbaijan from ancient times to the present day (Imamverdiyev, 2005).

3. Research Methodology

The research utilized a qualitative research method. Qualitative research methods involve techniques such as observation, interviews, and document analysis, aimed at presenting perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic manner in their natural environment (Karataş, 2017). In this study, the relevant literature was thoroughly reviewed, and interviews were conducted with local residents. Semi-structured interview questions were created for these interviews, which were conducted with individuals aged 40 and above. The sample was thought to be knowledgeable about dishes that have become rare and were once made but are no longer prepared or are only prepared to a limited extent. The responses from 14 of the 20 interviewed individuals were included in the analysis. The responses from six individuals were not included in the analysis due to deficiencies in their answers. Following these interviews, soups, pastry-based dishes, meat dishes, salads, pilafs, stuffed dishes, desserts, and beverages present in Azerbaijani cuisine were identified. Subsequently, two recipes from each category were prepared by an expert instructor in the

practical kitchen of Atatürk University Faculty of Tourism and recorded on video. QR codes were created to include these video recordings in the research. Scanning these QR codes allows access to the application of the recipes.

4. Research Findings

When thinking of Azerbaijani national cuisine, one immediately recalls a cuisine rich in ancient, diverse, and delicious dishes. Approximately 2000 dishes are known in Azerbaijani cuisine. Accurately researching this cuisine is certainly not easy. The Azerbaijani national cuisine is not only about dishes and methods of preparation but is also one of the main components of material culture. Table 1 lists the names of dishes belonging to Azerbaijan.

Table 1. Azerbaijani Dishes

Soups	Dovga, Dushbere, Meat Soup, Chicken Soup, Umac, Noodle Soup, Vegetable Soup, Evelik Soup, Fish Soup, Balva, Saffron Bouillon, Pomegranate Bouillon
Dough dishes	Hingel, Greens Gutabi, Meat Qutabi, Guymak, Gürze, Sümbülvari Potato Hingel, Firni, Haşıl, Feseli
Meat dishes	Roast, Bozartma, Köfte Bozbaş, Tike Bozbaş, Kebabs (Tike, Lüle, Bastırma, Han Kebab), Sac İç, Piti, Boiled Meat, Pomegranate Roast
Pilafs	Shah Pilaf, Fisincan Pilaf, Garali Pilaf, Döşeme Pilaf, Vegetable Pilaf, Zirinc Chicken Pilaf, Bean Pilaf, Chicken Pilaf, Levengi Pilaf, Hanlik Pilaf, Milk Pilaf, Liver Pilaf, Pomegranate Pilaf, Dill Pilaf, Fruit Pilaf, Minced Meat Pilaf
Salads	Hazar Salad, Chicken Salad, Çoban Salad, Azerbaijani Salad, Roasted Salad, Şeki Salad, Bahar Salad
Dolmas	Pip Dolma, Stuffed Grape Leaves, Tomato-Pepper-Eggplant Dolma, Quince Dolma, Onion Dolma, Potato Dolma, Apple Dolma, Evelik Dolma
Desserts	Irevan Kete, Baku Baklava, Ganja Baklava, Guba Baklava, Sheki Baklava, Shekerbura, Badambura, Halva, Mutakke, Sugar Bun, Baku Cookie, Egirdek, Kövrek and Hırçılıtlı Gatlama, Partlama, Umac Halva, Kete, Şor goğal, Semeni Halva, Govut with Rose Water, Peşven, Şeki Külçesi, Şirin Nazik, Şeki Ovması, Cevizli Borucuk, Cevizli Ordubad Dürmeyi
Drinks	Rose Sherbet, Lemon Sherbet, Pomegranate Sherbet, Saffron Sherbet, Mint Sherbet, Sumac Sherbet, Milk Sherbet. Ovşala, Compotes

Source: Compiled by the author

In this study, a descriptive research method was employed as the data analysis technique. Interviews were conducted with local residents to identify the dishes of Azerbaijan. The interview questions consisted of 15 items. The

questions began with demographic characteristics such as gender and age, followed by the questions listed below:

- Do you include local dishes in your home?
- Do you think the diversity of Azerbaijani local dishes is sufficient?
- Do you find Azerbaijani local dishes delicious?
- What soups are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What dishes made with dough are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What meat dishes are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What salads are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What pilafs are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What stuffed dishes are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What desserts are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What beverages are included in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- Can you share the stories behind any dishes in Azerbaijani cuisine?
- What needs to be done to preserve Azerbaijani culinary culture and promote it internationally?

As a result of these interviews, the well-known and beloved dishes of Azerbaijan were identified by the local people. Some of these identified dishes were prepared in the kitchen of Atatürk University Faculty of Tourism and recorded on video. The interviews were conducted with women from the local community. The age range of the respondents was between 40 and 70 years. An analysis of the responses indicated that participants prepare local dishes at home, find them delicious, and express that local cuisine is rich. Participants emphasized that festivals should be organized to preserve Azerbaijani culinary culture, that food and beverage establishments serving Azerbaijani dishes should be opened abroad, and that academic studies and books promoting this cuisine should be developed.

Through the interviews, the soups available in Azerbaijan were identified, including *dovğa*, *düşbere*, meat soup, chicken soup, *umaç*, noodle soup, vegetable soup, *evelik* soup, fish soup, *balva*, saffron bouillon, and pomegranate bouillon. As part of the research, the forgotten *umaç* soup (Table 2) and sour chicken soup (Table 3) were prepared practically.

Table 2. *Umaç Soup in Azerbaijani Cuisine*





UMAÇ SOUP		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Flour (50 g) Melted fat (20 g) Egg (1 piece) Dried onion (18 g) Dried mint (1 g) Saffron Salt	Salted water mixed with beaten egg is sprinkled over the flour, and the flour is kneaded. The resulting small dough crumbs are collected. The fried onion is boiled in meat broth. The dough crumbs are sifted through a sieve to separate them from the remaining flour and poured into the boiling broth while being stirred continuously. When served, saffron is added to the umaç, and it is garnished with mint.	 

Table 3. *Sour Chicken Soup in Azerbaijani Cuisine*

SOUR CHICKEN SOUP		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Chicken meat (155 g) Rice (25 g) Melted fat (20 g) Plum or sour plum (20 g) Chickpeas (20 g) Dried onion (20 g) Dill (10 g) Pepper, saffron, salt	The chicken meat is boiled, and rice is cooked in its broth. Fried onions are added, and about 15 minutes before it is ready, boiled chickpeas and plums (or dried plums) are added. The other ingredients are added until it is ready to serve.	 

Dishes made with dough in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including hingal, greens gutabı, meat gutabı, guymak, gürze, bulbous potato hingalı, firni, haşıl, and feseli. As part of the research, the forgotten noodle (Table 4) and dry hingal (Table 5) were prepared practically.

Table 4. Noodle in Azerbaijani Cuisine





NOODLE		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Beef or lamb (500 g) Dried onion (1 piece) Noodles (3 handfuls or 2 handfuls of fine vermicelli) Coriander and dill (one bunch each) Grape or apple vinegar (50 ml) Salt and black pepper	The meat is washed and ground together with the onion in a meat grinder. Small balls are made from the resulting minced meat and dropped into boiling water. After boiling for approximately 15-20 minutes, the noodles are added, and the dish is boiled until ready. Salt and black pepper are added. Before serving, the greens are chopped into small pieces. Noodles are usually served with vinegar or garlic yogurt.	 

Table 5. Dry Hingal in Azerbaijani Cuisine

DRY HINGAL		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
<p><u>For the Filling:</u> Water Beef or lamb (500 g) Dried onion (3 pieces) Butter (3 tablespoons) Garlic yogurt (500 g) Salt and black pepper</p> <p><u>For the Dough:</u> Flour (1 kg) Egg (1 piece) Water</p>	<p>The dough is kneaded with flour, egg, water, and salt. The dough is divided into balls the size of tennis balls and rolled out thinly and round with a rolling pin. The dough is then cut into equilateral triangles measuring 5-6 cm and dried. The dough pieces are boiled and passed through a sieve. The boiled dough is served. It is topped with garlic yogurt, melted fat, and minced meat (fried with onion). Pomegranate seeds can also be added on top if desired.</p>	 

Meat dishes in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including kavurma, bozartma, köfte bozbaş, tike bozbaş, kebabs (tike, lüle, bastırma, han kebabı), sac iç, piti, haşlama, and nar kavurma. As part of the research, the forgotten köfte bozbaş (Table 6) and kazan köfte (Table 7) were prepared practically.

Table 6. Köfte Bozbaş in Azerbaijani Cuisine




KÖFTE BOZBAŞ		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
<p> Sheep meat (163 g) Tail fat (20 g) Rice (15 g) Fresh sour plum (30 g) or dried plum (10 g) Chickpeas (25 g) Potatoes (150 g) Dried onion (18 g) Saffron, dried mint, pepper, salt </p>	<p> A certain amount of bone is boiled to obtain bone broth. The tender pieces of sheep meat are passed through a meat grinder with the dried onion. </p> <p> Rice, pepper, and salt are added to the minced meat and mixed well. 2-3 washed dried plums are placed inside each meatball. </p> <p> After the chickpeas are cooked in the bone broth, the meatballs are added to the broth and cooked. At the same time, potatoes and finely chopped and fried onions are added. 10-15 minutes before the dish is ready, saffron dissolved in a little water, salt, and pepper are added, and when ready to serve, it is garnished with coriander or dried mint. </p>	 

Table 7. Kazan Köfte in Azerbaijani Cuisine

KAZAN KÖFTE		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Minced beef (500 g) 5 tomatoes 4 sweet peppers 3 dried onions 7-8 potatoes Salt, black pepper 3 cups water 3 tablespoons butter	The minced meat is mixed with salt and black pepper, and round meatballs are formed and fried. The potatoes, tomatoes, and sweet peppers are sliced into rounds. The onion is also chopped, salted, and squeezed until its juice is released. The diced potatoes are arranged at the bottom of a pot. On top of the potatoes, the onions, fried meatballs, more onions, tomatoes, and peppers are layered. Spices are added, and water and butter are poured in and left to cook. It is served after cooking.	 

Salads in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including hazar salad, chicken salad, shepherd's salad, Azerbaijani salad, roasted salad, Sheki salad, and spring salad. As part of the research, the forgotten roasted salad and chicken salad were prepared practically. Detailed recipes for chicken salad (Table 8) and roasted salad (Table 9) are provided below.

Table 8. Chicken Salad in Azerbaijani Cuisine





CHICKEN SALAD		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
4 colored peppers 4-5 carrots 200 g chicken breast 300 g corn Lettuce, dill, and chervil 150-200 g mayonnaise 2-3 fresh cucumbers Salt, black pepper	All ingredients are julienned and mixed with mayonnaise. Spices are added. Optionally, walnuts can be added on top when serving.	 

Table 9. Roasted Salad in Azerbaijani Cuisine

ROASTED SALAD		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
8 eggplants 5 tomatoes 3 sweet peppers 1 hot pepper 3 cloves of garlic 1 onion Half a bunch of parsley (or basil) Salt, pepper Olive oil	Eggplants, tomatoes, and peppers are roasted, peeled, and chopped. The other ingredients are added and seasoned. It can be served after resting in the refrigerator for 3-4 hours.	 

Pilafs in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including şah pilaf, fisincan pilaf, garalı pilaf, döşeme pilaf, vegetable pilaf, zirinçli chicken pilaf, bean pilaf, chicken pilaf, levengi pilaf, hanlık pilaf,

shepherd's aşı, milk pilaf, liver pilaf, pomegranate pilaf, dill pilaf, fruit pilaf, and minced meat pilaf. As part of the research, the forgotten şah pilaf and fisincan pilaf were prepared practically. Detailed recipes for shah pilaf (Table 10) and fisincan pilaf (Table 11) are provided below.

Table 10. Shah Pilaf in Azerbaijani Cuisine





SHAH PILAF		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Saffron threads (0.5 g) Rice (3 cups) Salt (1 teaspoon) Melted butter (200 g) Lamb (600 g) Melted fat (300 g) Dried onions (3-4 pieces) Dried plums (150 g) Dried apricots (150 g) Dried raisins (300 g) Lavash (10 pieces) Optional: black pepper and turmeric	<p>The rice is soaked in salty water for 4-6 hours. It is boiled until partially cooked, strained, and then saffron is added after it is completely drained.</p> <p>The meat is cut into small pieces and marinated with salt, black pepper, and dried plums for a while.</p> <p>On the other hand, the pot in which the rice will be cooked is greased. A narrow-bottomed, wide-mouthed pot is needed for cooking this pilaf.</p> <p>Five pieces of lavash are placed at the bottom of the pot, hanging over the edges. Each layer is greased. One-third of the rice is added on top of the lavash layer at the bottom. After placing some meat on top, the remaining half of the rice is added to cover the meat. Then, chestnuts, dried plums, and seedless raisins are added on top, followed by the remaining rice, and the edges of the lavash are folded over the rice.</p> <p>The remaining lavash pieces are greased and placed over the rice. The pot is placed in a preheated oven at 130 degrees Celsius. After 40 minutes, the pilaf is removed from the oven, greased again, and returned to bake. After 80 minutes, the pilaf is removed from the oven and greased again before being inverted out of the pot. A hole is made in the center of the pilaf, and it is cut and served.</p> <p><u>For Lavash Preparation:</u> Wheat flour, water, and egg are kneaded with salt until a dough is formed. The dough is then rolled out into a round shape, 2 mm thick. The rolled-out lavash pieces are placed in the oven without greasing.</p>	 

Table 11. *Fisincan Pilaf in Azerbaijani Cuisine*



FISINCAN PILAF		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Lamb (220 g) Rice (150 g) Melted fat (50 g) Walnut (50 g) Pomegranate (50 g) Citric acid (2 g) Dried onion (20 g) Cinnamon, saffron Black pepper, salt	Small meatballs are rolled from the minced meat and cooked in a mixture of fat and water. Citric acid dissolved in water is poured over the crushed walnuts. The prepared meat is cooked with fried onions, peeled walnuts, some broth, and pomegranate seeds until ready. Additionally, rice is prepared for pilaf. When served, a mound of pilaf is placed on the plate, and fat is poured over it.	 

Stuffed dishes in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including pip dolması, leaf dolması, cabbage leaf dolması, tomato, pepper, eggplant dolması, quince dolması, onion dolması, potato dolması, apple dolması, and evelik dolması. As part of the research, the forgotten three sisters dolma and apple dolma were prepared practically. Detailed recipes for three sisters dolma (Table 12) and apple dolması (Table 13) are provided below.

Table 12. Three Sisters Dolma in Azerbaijani Cuisine

THREE SISTERS DOLMA		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
<p><u>For the Filling:</u> 500 g medium-fat minced meat 2 dried onions 2 tablespoons of boiled and peeled chickpeas or 1-2 tablespoons of rice A pinch of basil 1 tablespoon of butter Salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes 1 teaspoon of cinnamon 1 teaspoon of turmeric The pulp removed from the tomatoes for stuffing</p> <p><u>For the Vegetables:</u> 5 eggplants 5 bell peppers 5 firm tomatoes</p> <p><u>For the Vegetable Filling:</u> 1 teaspoon of black pepper 1 teacup of salt 1 teaspoon of turmeric 1 tablespoon of butter 1 teacup of water (can be increased)</p>	<p>In a suitable pot, the minced meat is added and sautéed. Chopped onions are added, covered, and cooked for a while. Then, salt, black pepper, red pepper flakes, and the insides of the tomatoes are added, and it is covered and left to cook. When the mixture absorbs its liquid, cinnamon, turmeric, butter, and chickpeas or rice are added. Finally, a pinch of basil is added to prepare the stuffing for the dolmas.</p> <p>On the other hand, the tops of the eggplants are cut off, and a slit is made in the middle. They are soaked in salty water for 15-20 minutes to remove the bitter water and then fried in a little oil. The tops of the tomatoes are cut off and hollowed out. The peppers are also prepared, and the mixture of turmeric, black pepper, and salt is spread inside the vegetables, which are then filled with the minced mixture. They are arranged in a wide pot, and water and butter are added on top. They are first cooked on high heat and then on low heat for 20-25 minutes.</p> <p>They are served with yogurt on the side.</p>	 

Table 13. Apple Dolma in Azerbaijani Cuisine

APPLE DOLMA		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Mutton (60 gr) Melted butter (10 gr) Apple (200 gr) Onion (15 gr) Sugar (5 gr) Grape vinegar (10 gr)	Saffron, salt and minced meat are fried in oil. Sugar and vinegar are added. The core of the round apples is removed. The apples are stuffed with minced meat and cooked with a little broth. It is served with onions fried in oil on top.	 

Desserts in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including İrevan ketesi, Baku baklava, Ganja baklava, Guba baklava, Sheki baklava, şekerbura, badambura, halva, mütakke, sugar pie, Baku cookies, egirdek, kövrek and hırcılıtlı gatlama, partlama, umaç halva, kete, şor goğal, semeni halva, rose water govut, peşven, Sheki külçesi, şirin nazik, Sheki ovması, walnut borucuk, and walnut ordubad dürme desserts. As part of the research, the forgotten ter halva and starch halva were prepared practically. Detailed recipes for ter halva (Table 14) and starch halva (Table 15) are provided below.

Table 14. Ter Halva in Azerbaijani Cuisine





TER HALVA		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
<p>Wheat flour (400 gr) Melted butter (200 gr) Molasses (250 gr) or granulated sugar (200 gr) Cinnamon</p>	<p>The oil and flour are roasted, and after the color darkens, molasses is added and mixed. If desired, syrup made with sugar instead of molasses is poured and mixed until the water is absorbed. Cinnamon is sprinkled on top when serving.</p>	 

Table 15. Starch Halva in Azerbaijani Cuisine

STARCH HALVA		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
<p>Melted butter (200 gr) Granulated sugar (180 gr) Wheat starch (120 gr) Saffron</p>	<p>Starch is mixed with a tea glass of water. On the other hand, syrup is added to the fried oil. Saffron should be added to the syrup while preparing the syrup. Starch is added to the oil-syrup mixture by stirring quickly. After the halva cools, granulated sugar is poured on it and served.</p>	 

Beverages in Azerbaijan were identified through literature review and interviews, including rose syrup, lemon syrup, pomegranate syrup, saffron syrup, mint syrup, sumac syrup, milk syrup, ovşala, and compotes. As part of the research, the forgotten sumac syrup and compote were prepared practically. Detailed recipes for sumac syrup (Table 16) and plum compote (Table 17) are provided below.

Table 16. Sumac Syrup in Azerbaijani Cuisine





SUMAC SYRUP		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
Sumac (100 gr) Granulated sugar (500 gr) Water (1.5 liters)	Sugar and water are boiled to make syrup. Sumac is added to this syrup and served after it has cooled.	 

Table 17. Plum Compote in Azerbaijani Cuisine

PLUM COMPOTE		
Ingredients:	Preparation:	
1 kilo plums 2 cups sugar Water	Chop the plums, remove their seeds. Put them in a pot and add water and sugar. Once the plums have softened, remove them from the stove and serve after cooling.	 

Conclusion and Recommendations

The limited research available on Azerbaijani cuisine makes it impossible to promote it and thus develop gastronomic tourism. Therefore, this study identified the dishes, which are the most significant tangible reflections of culinary culture. In this context, interviews were conducted with local residents in Azerbaijan, relevant literature was reviewed, and sources related to Azerbaijani cuisine were evaluated in detail. The interviews were conducted with women aged between 40 and 70. The soups, dishes made with dough, meat dishes, salads, pilafs, stuffed dishes, desserts, and beverages of Azerbaijani cuisine were assessed within these categories. As a result of the interviews, two recipes from each category were determined, prepared at the kitchen of Atatürk University Faculty of Tourism, and recorded on video, with access to these videos provided through QR codes.

It is crucial to promote Azerbaijani culinary culture and increase its appeal in gastronomic tourism. By doing so, we can send tourists home satisfied with the experiences they expected, which is believed to lead to a significant increase in promotion and the likelihood of repeat visits. Returning gastro tourists are expected to be inclined to taste all regional dishes due to their previous positive experiences. To increase satisfaction levels, meet expectations, and offer authentic regional flavors, there is a need for training, certification, legal protection and regulations, standard recipes, and the use of written, visual, and social media for promotions.

In gastronomic tourism, and especially with local dishes, individuals must visit the homeland of the products they wish to taste. Gastro tourists now desire not only to taste the product on-site but also to actively participate in its production, preparation, and presentation processes to understand the secret of the flavors. Local dishes reflect and promote the culinary culture of their respective countries, and the sharing of the same table by tourists with local people plays a significant role in fostering relationships.

Promoting Azerbaijani culinary culture and increasing its appeal in gastronomic tourism is of great importance. To achieve this, it would be appropriate to emphasize the promotion of products that are palatable and acceptable to other cultures without being overly challenging to their taste preferences. Each region of Azerbaijan has its own cuisine and flavors. Additionally, the country boasts a rich flora and fauna. The taste of the Azerbaijani people is considered very diverse and colorful for tourists. Numerous examples have survived from ancient cultures, such as those of Christianity, fire worship, and Islam. Based on these examples, various tours can be organized to different regions of Azerbaijan. It is crucial to include

gastronomic tours and routes in the tour packages offered to tourists. Moreover, there is a need to promote Azerbaijani national cuisine in other countries. Azerbaijani cuisine should be prominently featured in international events and forums. Many books and articles about Azerbaijani cuisine should be written. If these steps are taken, it is possible to attract more tourists from different countries in the future, and Azerbaijani cuisine can be recognized worldwide.

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