

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a white chef's coat, is holding a large wooden tray filled with several golden-brown, stuffed breads. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a bakery or kitchen setting with shelves of more breads and a sign with Arabic script. The lighting is warm and focused on the man and the breads.

GLOBAL ROAMING

# BERLIN

Germany's capital of cool is home to a diverse cultural landscape and a melting pot of nationalities. Vanessa Murray meets Berlin's strong Turkish community who have enriched the city's cultural and culinary offerings.

PHOTOGRAPHY  
JACKSON EATON



very Tuesday and Friday for the past century, Maybachufer Strasse – a pretty, tree-lined street running alongside the Landwehrkanal (Landwehr Canal) in Neukölln – has been coming alive with the hustle and bustle of Berlin’s biggest Turkish market, the Türkenmarkt.

Locals of native German and Turkish origin alike haggle over freshly made breads, cheeses, dips, *dolma* (stuffed vegetables), fresh produce, fish, meat, as well as goods imported from Turkey, including jams, yoghurts, spices and coffee. And the good news? There’s no need to wait until you get home to indulge: many of the foods on display – such as the wares at Hüseyin Ayyaz’s stall – are Turkish snacks, designed to be eaten on the move. Hüseyin does a roaring trade in various types of *dolma* and *börek* (pastries layered with spinach and *tulum*, a soft white goat’s-milk cheese). Then, there’s the house specialty: *gözleme*, an oven-baked, soft flatbread cooked with oil on a griddle that his niece, 20-year-old Gökçe Agezoğlu, deftly fills with cheese, tomato and rocket, then rolls for easy handling and eating.

Thirty-nine year old Hüseyin moved to Berlin from Trabzon, a city on the Black Sea on Turkey’s north-eastern coast in 1987, and has been trading at the Türkenmarkt for eight years. In addition to his popular snack foods, he also sells homemade cheeses, dips, olives and breads. As many as 15 members of his family gather to make breads – including *bağlama* (a circular flatbread baked on a hot plate) and *simit* (a sesame seed-covered bread that is a cross between a bagel and a bread roll) – making it a bonafide family affair.

Gökçe and Hüseyin are just two of Berlin’s estimated 180,000 German Turks. Between 2.5 million and 3 million people of Turkish origin live in Germany, and after the Germans themselves, form the country’s largest ethnic group.

Turkish migrants first settled in Germany in the 16th and 17th centuries, following the Ottoman Empire’s unsuccessful attempt to expand its territories, but it wasn’t until the 1960s that large-scale waves of migration began, as Turks, seeking relief from political unrest and mass unemployment at home, took up the German government’s offer to recruit foreign workers and relocated to Berlin.

Most settled in the suburbs of Neukölln, Wedding or Kreuzberg. Today, Kreuzberg is affectionately termed ‘*Kleine Istanbul*’ (‘Little Istanbul’) by the locals, and for good reason. Every store has signs in both Turkish and German (or sometimes, just Turkish), and stock a mind-boggling array of Turkish goods. During the day, women in Turkish dress shop and chat, while men gather in cafes to smoke *shisha*, drink *raki* (anise-flavoured liquor) and play cards late into the night.



**"BERLIN NEVER SLEEPS! IT'S A NICE MIX OF PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND CULTURES; IT'S LIKE A RAINBOW OF COLOURS."**



Restaurateur Kazim Binici's father, Veli, migrated to Berlin from Turkey's second largest city, Ankara, in 1969. "He and my mother were village people; they couldn't read or write. But my father was always seeking a better life, so as soon as he could, he came to Berlin."

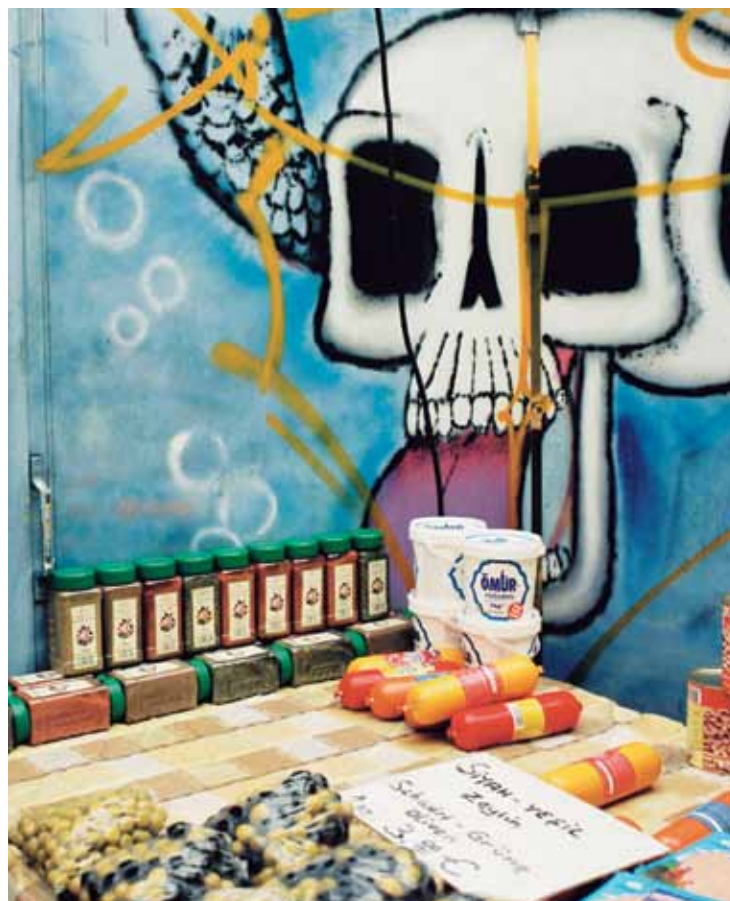
Kazim's father lived and worked in a carpet factory in Wedding alongside other Turkish migrants until 1971, when 10-year-old Kazim, his mother Sediye and brother Ali joined Veli in Berlin, and the family moved into a one-bedroom apartment. Kazim's father continued working in the carpet factory. His mother found work in a laundromat and went on to have four more children.

Kazim and Ali attended a class for migrant children in a German school for a few years until they learned German. Then, they were integrated into regular classes. Kazim became a social worker when he finished school, then ran a successful cocktail bar, and today, is co-owner of a popular Turkish restaurant in Kreuzberg called Defne.

Considered one of the best Turkish fine-dining restaurants in Berlin, Defne is also located near the Landwehrkanal and in summer, customers sit outside and soak up the evening sunshine that keeps Berlin aglow, sometimes until as late as 10pm. They order from the



Clockwise from left: Doyum Restaurant in Kreuzberg; Hüseyin Ayvaz from the Türkenmarkt; another stall at the market selling deli items; kebabs on the grill at Doyum Restaurant; the wide range of nuts on offer at Smyrna, a cafe in Kreuzberg.



East Anatolian-inspired à la carte menu or dine meze-style by grazing on appetisers such as *arnavut ciğeri* (lamb's liver with onions, parsley, yoghurt-garlic sauce and herb butter) or *baharatlı beyaz peynir* (pickled feta with olive oil, thyme, oregano, mint and rosemary on a bed of rocket and dried tomatoes).

"Turkish food is typically simple and full of flavour," says Kazim. Like their neighbours in the Mediterranean, Turkish chefs value fresh vegetables, meat and seafood, fragrant olive oil, fantastic spice combinations and the *ızgara* or grill. Middle Eastern influences such as rice, dried fruits, grape leaves, yoghurt and spices like cinnamon and saffron are used to season dishes and, "*Buyurun! Afiyet olsun!*" (Here you go! Bon appétit)."

"I love Berlin," Kazim says emphatically over an irresistible platter of *künefe*, a sweet-meets-savoury dessert of shredded filo and gooey cheese. "Berlin brought me up; it's one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It's different, it's unique. Berlin never sleeps! It's a nice mix of people of all ages and cultures; it's like a rainbow of colours."

It's true. Life on the streets of Berlin is culturally diverse, exciting and dynamic. Once, there was a sausage stand on every Berlin street corner; now, it's a kebab shop. In fact, the *döner kebab*, or doner kebab, as we know it today – lamb, beef or chicken strips served in Turkish pita with salad and sauce – is claimed to have been invented in Berlin in the early 1970s by Mehmet Aygün, the founder of the popular Hasir restaurants.

Instead of using a plate, Mehmet served the *iskender kebab* in bread and so, as the story goes, the doner kebab was born. He is also credited with creating the yoghurt sauce that now accompanies many a late-night kebab, and was hailed a food hero when he died in 2009.





Carving meat for doner kebabs at Doyum Restaurant. Clockwise from right: dips at the Türkenmarkt; Hasir Restaurant, Kreuzberg (it is believed the doner kebab was invented by the founder of these restaurants); kebabs being made at Bagdad Restaurant, another Turkish eatery in Kreuzberg.





Ismail Firat is another of Berlin's 1500-plus kebab shop owners. A softly spoken, gentle man from the city of Adiyaman in south-eastern Turkey, Ismail came to Berlin in 1990. Soon after, he opened Doyum Restaurant, a cosy, blue-tiled eatery-cum-takeaway joint on a cobblestoned corner in Kreuzberg. Meaning 'hearty', or 'satisfying' in Turkish, Doyum serves *adana*, doner, and *Iskender* kebabs until late, seven days a week, along with a range of pides, pizzas, salads, sweets and secret-recipe soups such as *kelle-paça çorbası* (an oily soup with lamb's brain and trotters) and *mercimek çorbası* (a creamy lentil soup).

Ismail takes his wife and children to Turkey to see family every couple of years, but has no plans to return permanently. "I will always feel more Turkish than German, but I've been here for 21 years; Berlin is my home. And my children? They are both German and Turkish! Their lives are here; our lives are here."

Despite the connection felt by German Turks like Kazim and Ismail to their adopted home and the popularity of *Türk mutfağı* (the Turkish kitchen) in Berlin, the relationship between the Turkish community and Germany is not always easy. In 2010, debate raged when Chancellor Angela Merkel told members of her Christian Democrats (CDU) party that Germany's approach to *multikulti* or multiculturalism, has "utterly failed".

Gökçe from the Türkenmarkt disagrees. "Multiculturalism is not dead; it's living. It's living here in Berlin and Germany. Look at this market! It's full of people; different people, living side by side."

"There are many challenges for Turkish people in Germany," comments Ismail of Doyum. "Policy is not on our side. If you are German, it is easier to get ahead. I am not against multiculturalism; I am not against other people," he says. "I've noticed that when people focus on multiculturalism, or on migrant people, they focus

on religion. My religion is important to me, but it should not be important for Germany. Today, for example, it is Ramadan, and I am fasting. But some of my staff, they are not fasting! That's okay; it is an individual thing."

Others, like Kazim of Defne, distance themselves from the argument. "I don't really like the term *multikulti*. They've been talking about *multikulti* here for years: about immigration, emigration, integration. There are a lot of people with a Turkish background who speak little or no German. That's just the truth!"

Angela Merkel thinks too little was required of immigrants in the past, and stresses that they must learn German in order to get by in school, find work and integrate with wider German society. But she also gives Germans a reality check, by telling them they must accept that mosques have become part of their landscape.





**BERLIN'S  
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Clockwise from left: Defne Restaurant, in Kreuzberg, sweets and pastries from Bäckerei Salut; enjoying a beer at Defne Restaurant; Turkish tea.



She's right. Mosques are spread throughout Germany, and Berlin is home to many, including the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Wilmersdorf, which was completed in 1926 and is Germany's oldest mosque. Berlin also boasts Turkish primary and secondary schools, more than 300 community centres, numerous shisha cafes, several *hamams* (traditional Turkish baths) and a theatre – the Komische Opera Berlin – which has now introduced performances in Turkish.

The women's hamam in Kreuzberg was established in a former chocolate factory in 1988. It's a private, sumptuous place for an afternoon or evening's bath, scrub or massage, and is frequented by Turkish and German women alike. There are also several more hamams, including one at Soho House in Mitte, which welcomes both men and women for a more modern and more quintessentially Germanic (read: no bathers necessary) public bathing experience.

Berlin's Turkish foodies have been quick to adapt traditional Turkish fare to the German palate and way of life, too. It didn't take long for 38-year-old Erol Çamli, for example, to realise that keeping the doors of his Turkish bakery in Kreuzberg open all hours would be good for business. "When we opened in 1994, we had normal opening hours. But I was here baking in the early hours of the morning – that's the baker's life! And I quickly realised we could be open then too – there were people around, they were looking in the window, they wanted to buy things."

So he extended his opening hours, and today, Bäckerei Salut is not only popular with locals wanting to buy fresh bread early in the morning, it's a hot spot for young people wanting a late-night snack after clubbing. Punters can choose from a range of sweet and savoury German and Turkish baked goods – think *gebäck* (almond-filled pastries), *yufka* (flatbread) and *tahinli pasta* (tahini cookies). It is however the king of Turkish sweets, baklava, that reigns supreme as Erol's most popular pastry.

Baking is in Erol's blood. His father, Tevfik, owns two bakeries in the municipality of Beşiktaş in Istanbul and all four of his brothers are bakers. "One of my father's bakeries is a traditional bakery that sells mostly bread," says Erol, "and the other is more like Bäckerei Salut; it sells a little bread and a lot of sweets and drinks."

"People in Berlin are always in a hurry; they don't have time to stop and savour things," says Erol. "In Turkey, we like to eat our food slowly. We sit down together, we listen to some music, we eat and talk, we enjoy it," says Erol. "That said," he continues, "things are changing in Turkey, too. Families used to bake at home. Now, it's more common for people to buy their bread." He pauses to take in life beyond his bakery door on busy Schlesische Strasse. "I guess life is getting faster everywhere." »





**Ahmadiyya Mosque**

Briener Strasse 7-8, Berlin  
 Wilmersdorf,  
[berlin.ahmadiyya.org](http://berlin.ahmadiyya.org).

**Bäckerei Salut**

Schlesische Strasse 1, 10997 Berlin  
 Kreuzberg, +49 30 618 24 05.

**Cowshed: Soho House Berlin**

Torstrasse 1, 10119 Berlin Mitte,  
 +49 30 40 50 44 130,  
[sohohouseberlin.com/cowshed](http://sohohouseberlin.com/cowshed).

**Defne Restaurant**

Planufer 92c, 10967 Berlin  
 Kreuzberg, +49 30 8179 7111,  
[defne-restaurant.de](http://defne-restaurant.de).

**Doyum Restaurant**

Admiralstrasse 36-37, 10999 Berlin  
 Kreuzberg, +49 30 6165 6127.

**Hasir Restaurant**

There are six Hasir restaurants  
 in Berlin, [hasir.de/eng](http://hasir.de/eng).

**Komische Opera Berlin**

Behrenstrasse 55-57, 10117 Berlin,  
 +49 30 4799 7400,  
[komische-oper-berlin.de/en](http://komische-oper-berlin.de/en).

**Türkenmarkt**

Held every Tuesday and Friday.  
 Maybachufer Strasse, 12047  
 Berlin Neukölln, [visitberlin.de/en/spot/tuerkischer-markt-am-maybachufer](http://visitberlin.de/en/spot/tuerkischer-markt-am-maybachufer).

**Women's hamam**

Mariannenstrasse 6, 10997 Berlin  
 Kreuzberg, +49 30 615 14 64,  
[hamamberlin.de](http://hamamberlin.de).



Clockwise from top: Hasir Restaurant in Kreuzberg; shisha at Cafe Sila, one of the many shisha cafes in Berlin; the Ahmadiyya Mosque, Germany's oldest mosque; the Komische Opera Berlin, which now shows performances in Turkish.