

Türkiye, Greece at odds over 'kokoreç'

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Türkiye and Greece are now at odds over the street delicacy "kokoreç" following the news Turkish media created backlash in the neighboring country.

"We will now fight for kokoretsi", said the Greek news sites.

"Turks are trying to claim kokoretsi, after the islands," they said.

"Turkish-Greek food wars," said the headlines.

Master Vasil, also known as the "Meatmakers' Quarter", who has been cooking 'kokoretsi' for years in the Vari district of Athens, spoke to Greek Skai TV.

"Kokoretsi has nothing to do with kokoreç. I've been to Istanbul and tried kokoreç. Ours is more delicious," he said.

"Turks only use intestines. On the other hand, we fill the intestine with live, kidney, sweetbread and spices," he added.

In Greece, a serving size of kokoretsi varies between 9 to 12 euros (160-250 Turkish Liras). 'Cuisine' has an important place in the Turkish-Greek relations. Although the materials used are different and the cooking styles vary in the cuisines of the two countries, there are many 'common dishes' such as cacık-cacık, imam bayıldı- imam baidi, köfte-keftes, and musakka-mousakas.

According to Hürriyet writer Ebru Erke, meals often belong to common geographies.

"We can see similar dishes with different versions in similar geographies. It is very important to be able to own a dish, include it in your culture and promote it," Erke said.

"After a certain point, whoever respects the food's story, past, tradition and maintains it, that food always belongs to that culture," she said.

"When we say street food, kokoreç is one of the top three dishes. I think whoever owns a dish more, it belongs to them. So, kokoreç is a Turkish dish," she added.

Özyeğin University Head of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Department Assoc. Dr. Özge Samancı also commented on this topic.

"The origins of dishes known and practice in Turkish Greek cuisines today, such as kokoreç, baklava, dolma, and cacık, are based on a common historical past. A common culinary culture was formed in the geographies of today's Turkey and Greece, which were part of the same empire during the Ottoman period," she said.

"For this reason, although there are differences in the cooking techniques of baklava or kokoreç, the same dishes are important for everyone in today's national cuisines. So, kokoreç is neither a Greek nor a Turkish dish. It is the food of both geographies," Samancı said.

"Examining the origins of food in terms of food history is a separate issue," she added.

Samancı also conveyed that Central Asian Turkish, Middle Age Arab, Byzantine, Seljuk and long Ottoman period culinary heritages live in today's Turkish culinary culture.

She states that kokoreç is not a Turkish word and it derives from the Albanian dialect, meaning corncob, according to the Nişanyan dictionary.

“However, this etymological knowledge does not provide information about to which geography the food belongs to,” she said.

“We do not have any information about how long the artisans who sold kelle paça, pencevüş kebab, mumbar, tripe, liver kebab in the Ottoman period, have been selling kokoreç. But we come across the recipe for kokoreç in the cookbook, “Ev Kadını”, which was published in Istanbul in 1883, which belongs to the Ottoman period,” she added.