

FINANCIAL TIMES

how to spend it

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BILL KNOTT

As intercontinental cruises go, the ferry ride from the Golden Horn, on the European side of Istanbul, to Kadiköy, cultural heart of the city's Asian district, is hardly an epic voyage. It takes half an hour and costs just a few lira.

For a food-loving, ocean-going bird like The Gannet, however, it is a deeply rewarding trip. On a fine day, with the waters of the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara shimmering in the sunlight, it seems as though everyone has taken to the water in search of fresh air, panoramic views of the opulent palaces and mansions (*yalis*) lining the banks and, most importantly, a long, lazy lunch.

In Kadiköy's bustling bazaar, just a few minutes' walk from the dockside, that might be at Kadi Nimet Balıkçılık, a fishmonger-cum-restaurant: choose your catch, then pay a small supplement to have it cooked and served in the no-frills dining room. A plate of quick-fried hamsi (anchovies, a particular delicacy in Istanbul), perhaps, or grilled bonito, stuffed mussels, shellfish wrapped in chard, or smoky grilled octopus.

FOOD | THE GANNET

Istanbul's Kadi Nimet Balıkçılık and Tapasuma

The Bosphorus by boat is the best way to access the glorious gastronomy at two outstanding Istanbul restaurants



For a truly sybaritic lunch, though, travel a few miles up the Bosphorus to Sumahan on the Water, a 19th-century Ottoman distillery now transformed into one of the world's great waterside hotels. You could arrive in style too: the hotel boasts its own motor launch and private jetty. Its restaurant, Tapasuma (pictured), is one of the finest in Istanbul. Chef Gökay Çakıroğlu deftly blends the traditional and the gastronomic in a succession of light, beautifully conceived dishes, modelled on classic Turkish meze but with a modern sensibility for texture, flavour and presentation.

Gloriously fragrant Kirkagac melon is partnered with fresh mint and a white-cheese brûlé scattered with nigella seeds; delicate courgette flowers are stuffed with rice, salmon and sea bass; taramasalata is made with the roe of sturgeon rather than grey mullet; little dolmades are stuffed with rice cooked in cherry juice; cumin-scented hummus is served with pastırma (cured, spiced beef) and meltingly soft green chillies; and squares of sheeps' cheese dusted with emerald-green pistachio sit atop cubes of melon. There is fried whiting too, as well as içli köfte – stuffed meatballs coated in fine bulgur wheat, perched on chopped walnuts and pomegranate seeds.

It was a delightful, flawless lunch. There is a terrific wine list too, although, both as a tribute to the building's original function and as the traditional Turkish accompaniment to meze, a bottle of Yeni raki might be more appropriate – a spirit that, like lunch in Istanbul, is at its finest when blended with water.

The Gannet has more tips on where to get the best meze in Istanbul, or follow Julian Allason as he spends a long weekend discovering all that the City on the Bosphorus has to offer.

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