



## Turkish Coffee – A Journey Beyond Tradition

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The perfect brew - a Turkish coffee process

It's not a secret that the Turks love tea, but there's a special attachment that Turkey has to coffee, too. So much so, that Turkish coffee (or *Türk kahvesi* in Turkish) is world-renowned for its characteristic style of brew, taste, and even aesthetic. The Greeks and Armenians also hold claim to this style of coffee, calling it Greek coffee and Armenian coffee respectively, but we'd rather not get into that debate.

## The World Catches Coffee's Aroma

Interestingly enough, the Turkish word for coffee, *kahve*, is just one stepping stone in the linguistic journey of the word through cultures, and the drink itself. The story goes that a goatherd in or around Ethiopia noticed that some animals in his flock ate a specific berry of sorts, which caused them to become excitable and energetic. From there, as humans tend to experiment, the drink we know as coffee began its developmental journey.

The Arabs called it *qahwa*, and when the Turks came into contact with it, they called it *kahve*. The drink met the Italians, who called it *caffè*, and then onto the Dutch who knew it as *kaffee*,



*A refined, yet somewhat mystical Turkish coffee setup.*

## Turkish, Traditional, Delightful

The Turks, for the most part, tend to stick to the traditional way of brewing the drink – a few teaspoons of finely-ground coffee added to water in a copper coffee pot known as a *cezve* (pronounced "jez-veh") or *ibrik* (pronounced "eeb-reek"). It's and slow-brewed over coals, in hot sand, or simply on a stovetop. Sugar is added (if you so wish), usually before brewing and heated with the coffee. It's not added after, as you may be used to. Also, if you haven't noticed yet, no milk is added to the coffee. And yes, it's strong.

Yes, Turkish coffee can be compared to an Italian espresso, but it tends to be a tad stronger – which is why it's usually served with a glass of water and *lokum* (Turkish delight) on the side. The water is a palate cleanser, while the *lokum* sweetens the tongue. *Lokum* is sometimes swapped for a piece of chocolate or two. It all depends on the establishment in which you're served. For choice *lokum*, we always suggest visiting the [Spice Bazaar](#) (or Egyptian Bazaar) in the heart of Istanbul's Old City for traditional splendour and a wide range. There's also Hafiz Mustafa to get your sweet fix, if you're looking for a more premium experience.







*The instrument in which the drink is brewed – the cezve/ibrik*

eventually leading to the English where we know it as coffee (amongst all its other nicknames). So, there you go – a simplistic rendering of the drink's linguistic journey.

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# Crème de la Crème – A Turkish Coffee Process

We mentioned that *Türk kahvesi* is often brewed over hot coals or hot sand (the latter, especially, is an intriguing cultural experience to witness). The heat should be evenly distributed around the outside of the *cezve*, and the slower the brew, the better the coffee. This all leads to the froth on top. Turks call it *köpük*, but you might be familiar with the term *crema* if you're used to espressos or espresso-based drinks. The thicker the *köpük*, the more highly regarded the *kahve*. The froth, *crema*, or *köpük* that sits atop your demitasse cup of Turkish coffee holds a special flavour and texture that acquaints you with the rest of the drink that you're about to enjoy.



*Brewing to a froth in hot sand.*

## How to Order? Get That Brew to You

So, where to find that perfect cup of Turkish coffee? Ambling through the cobblestone streets of some of Turkey's favourite tourist cities, and elsewhere, look out for any sign that reads "*Közde kahve*". Literally, this means "coffee on coals" and signifies that you'll find the perfect cup brewed over hot coals *a la Turkca*. Or get your coffee freshly-roasted from arguably one of the best roasters in the city, [Mehmet Efendi](#). Stock up on your new favourite beverage to take back home or to gift to friends or family who are really worth it.

You're keen for coffee, but the strength of the coffee worries you a little. We did say that sugar is added to the brew, so how does one ask for it? Sugar content in your coffee comes in various levels of sweetness.

A few phrases that could help when ordering your coffee:

*Bir Türk kahvesi alabilir miyim?* [beehr tyoork kah-veh-see ah-lah-bee-leehr mee-yeem] – Can I have a Turkish coffee?

*Şekerli* [sheh-kehr-lee] – With sugar (in this case, very sugary)

*Orta şekerli* [ohr-tah sheh-kehr-lee] – Medium sugar

*Az şekerli* [ahz sheh-kehr-lee] – A little sugar

*Sade* [sah-deh] – No sugar

## Spirited Away Through Coffee



*Over coals – a signature brew.*

*Kahve* tradition, however, isn't over when you've had your last sip. You'll notice that your cup is left with a sludge, of sorts, at the bottom – this is the finely-ground coffee that, unlike an espresso, isn't filtered out during brewing. A note for the wise: don't drink that. When the roasted beans are ground for Turkish coffee, they're ground even finer than for making espresso. These grounds, after unleashing their magical essence and imparting it to you, still hold a certain something special. They hold your fortune; past, present, and future.

*Fal bakmak*, to look at your fortune, is done both professionally and amongst friends and family. It's not uncommon to find cafés with the word “*fal*” in lights in the café's window. [Melekler Kahvesi](#) in Taksim is a choice retreat to dabble in the metaphysical in-between shopping and sight-seeing. Move along inside and your coffee will be served to you at a table, where you'll be accompanied by an individual who'll get to know you through amicable conversation – *sohbet*, the Turks call it. Once done, you'll be instructed to place the saucer over the top of the cup, hold them together and turn them over so the cup sits upside-down.

## Coffee and Destiny Intertwine

The coffee grounds, infused with your spirit, travel down the sides of the cup and onto the saucer on a path that relates to you, so the tale goes. Upon instruction, you'll hand the cup and saucer over to your fortune-teller (*falcı*) who reads the symbols made by the movement of coffee grounds, both in negative and positive space inside the cup, as well as on the saucer. Your destiny and your path are told and foretold, something akin to the reading of tea leaves. Often, we find, is that all paths lead back to Turkey, a catalyst for further self-discovery.

Tripsters can always help with discovery of this sort, so contact us to help plot your Turkish destiny! Make a point of checking with us before-hand if you really want to explore Istanbul coffee, including the Turkish variety, in its most concentrated form: The [Istanbul Coffee Festival](#). Usually held in September, Tripsters can get you prepped and ready for a caffeine-fuelled trip!





*Kahve and lokum – A pairing*

We'll guide you to the best spots to drink this age-old brew, enhancing your tour and allowing you to experience the country by the aroma of the roasted coffee bean. Tradition is alive and well in Turkey, and you'll taste it in a strong cup that refreshes both the spirits and the palate.



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