

# The Ottomans | Table Culture

'Almost every dish had a different chef: head of soup, head of helva and so on.'

Table culture in the Ottoman Palace had unique status. Almost every dish had a different chef: head of soup (çorbacı), head of helva (helvacı) and so on. At banquets and Ramadan dinners (iftar), cushions were laid out on a textile that covered the floor. In the middle of the cushions a copper, silver or gilded-metal tray was placed upon which were put spoons of turtle-shell, coral, ivory or bone. The dishes followed a traditional order: the first dish was soup served in individual bowls; a main dish of red meat or chicken would follow that was served in very large metal vessels with lids (to keep the food warm), known as kuşane. The main dish was accompanied by drinks and sweets such as zerde, baklava and helva were served as the last course.



**Name:**  
Topkapı Palace

**Dynasty:**  
Construction began in hegira 9th century / AD 15th century, during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (his second reign: AH 855–86 / AD 1451–81); the last addition was made under Sultan Abdülmecid I ['Abd al-Majid] (r. AH 1255–77 / AD 1839–61) in hegira 13th century / AD 19th century Ottoman

**Details:**  
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

**Justification:**  
An exterior view of the kitchens and their colossal chimneys. The palace kitchens served about 2,000 residents and more than 8,000 day-workers.

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**Name:**  
Large plate with floral decoration

**Dynasty:**  
Around Hegira 957–63 / AD 1550–5 Ottoman

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum  
Berlin, Germany

**Justification:**  
Iznik ceramics used at table were to be, 'as beautiful if not better than the royal porcelain of China'.

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**Name:**  
Dish

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira last quarter of the 10th century / AD around 1575–1580 Ottoman

**Details:**  
The Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums  
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**  
Iznik ceramics used at table were to be, 'as beautiful if not better than the royal porcelain of China'.

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**Name:**  
Dish

**Dynasty:**

Hegira first half of the 11th century / AD first half of the 17th century Ottoman

**Details:**

Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (Medelhavsmuseet)  
Stockholm, Sweden

**Justification:**

Iznik ceramics used at table were to be, 'as beautiful if not better than the royal porcelain of China'.

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**Name:**  
Lidded bowl

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 10th century / AD late 16th century Ottoman

**Details:**

National Museums of Scotland (NMS)  
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**

Ceramic lidded bowl, similar bowls are still used today in Turkey to serve sugar.

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