

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.



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'.



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'.



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'.



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.
