

Research Article

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SHARED DISHES IN TURKISH AND EGYPTIAN CULINARY TRADITIONS**Gül Seda Aydemir Çelenk** ^{1*}, **Şevki Ulema** ²¹Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Sakarya, Turkey²Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Sakarya, Turkey, ulema@subu.edu.tr*Corresponding author: gulaydemir@subu.edu.tr

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Abstract

This study examines selected shared dishes in Turkish and Egyptian culinary traditions through a qualitative, recipe-based comparative analysis. Instead of comparing the two cuisines as a whole, the study focuses on five paired dishes representing key food categories: lentil soup, muhammara, stuffed zucchini, semolina cake, and fried dough dessert. Data were collected through document analysis of cookbooks, academic sources, and widely used culinary websites. The comparison used predefined analytical dimensions: ingredient composition, cooking techniques, flavoring patterns, texture characteristics, and cultural context. The findings show that the selected dish pairs share a recognizable structural foundation but differ in supporting ingredients, seasoning logic, fat usage, preparation practices, and sensory outcomes. These variations suggest processes of culinary adaptation and localization shaped by historical interaction, regional preferences, and available ingredients. The study contributes to comparative gastronomy by proposing a structured, dish-based framework for analyzing culinary similarity and difference across related food traditions.

Keywords: Turkish cuisine; Egyptian cuisine; comparative gastronomy; culinary traditions; food culture

JEL Classification: Z39

1. Introduction

Turkish and Egyptian cuisines are historically rich culinary traditions shaped by geography, cultural exchange, and long-term social transformation. Their food cultures reflect local agricultural conditions and culinary habits, as well as broader historical interactions across the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. Although these traditions are usually studied separately, they also share several recognizable dishes and culinary structures that invite direct comparison. However, culinary similarity should not be mistaken for culinary sameness, as dishes with a similar structural base may differ significantly in ingredients, preparation, texture, seasoning, and cultural use.

This issue is relevant not only to food culture studies but also to tourism and hospitality research. Gastronomy has become an increasingly important component of destination image, destination branding, and tourism experience design. Local cuisine is now widely recognized as a cultural resource that shapes how visitors experience place, authenticity, and regional identity. Research has shown that gastronomy can enhance destination attractiveness, support heritage promotion, and strengthen tourists' emotional and cultural connection to a destination (Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arróspide, 2024; Gupta & Sharma, 2024). In hospitality contexts, food is not merely consumed as a functional service element; it is also presented and interpreted as part of a broader cultural experience.

Dish-based comparison can offer value for both scholarship and practice. From an academic perspective, it clarifies how related culinary traditions diverge through adaptation and localization. From a practical perspective, it can inform menu design, gastronomic storytelling, destination branding, and the presentation of culturally related foods to diverse visitor markets. Recent studies have shown that traditional foods and restaurant menus can serve as tools for regional heritage promotion and for communicating local identity to visitors (Dimitrovski et al., 2024). Similarly, research on local food

consumption suggests that food experiences may contribute not only to tourism attractiveness but also to sustainability and destination value creation (Wani et al., 2024).

Against this background, the present study examines selected shared dishes in Turkish and Egyptian culinary traditions through a comparative, recipe-based framework. It focuses on five paired dishes representing major food categories: lentil soup, muhammara, stuffed zucchini, semolina cake, and fried dough dessert. The central research question is whether these selected shared dishes differ across the two culinary traditions in ingredient composition, preparation practices, seasoning logic, sensory profile, and culinary meaning.

The study does not aim to determine whether one cuisine has borrowed more from the other, nor to identify a single authentic version of each dish. Instead, it examines how structurally similar dishes take distinct local forms through different ingredient choices, preparation techniques, textures, and cultural uses. In doing so, it addresses a comparative gap in the literature. Turkish and Egyptian cuisines are both well documented individually, yet relatively few studies examine them side by side through concrete dish-level comparisons.

The study makes three contributions. First, it addresses this comparative gap by moving from broad historical description to the analysis of specific dishes. Second, it proposes a structured comparative framework built around recurring analytical dimensions rather than general culinary characterization. Third, it offers a perspective relevant to tourism and hospitality, particularly where food is presented as part of destination identity, cross-cultural menu development, and culinary experience design.

The study is based on secondary textual sources, including cookbooks, academic publications, and widely used culinary websites. This approach makes it possible to compare documented and commonly represented versions of selected dishes while acknowledging that recipes vary across regions, households, and authors. The study therefore does not claim to establish definitive national versions of the dishes, but rather to identify recurring patterns and meaningful differences across documented forms.

2. Literature review

2.1. Turkish cuisine

Turkish cuisine has developed through a long historical process shaped by geographical diversity, social structure, religious influence, and changing food practices. Its evolution reflects both continuity and adaptation across different periods. In the Republican era, modernization brought significant changes, including the wider use of margarine, tomato paste, carbonated and non-carbonated beverages, and vegetable oils. Compared to earlier periods, the use of animal-based fats declined, while vegetable oils became more common. Contemporary Turkish cuisine continues to change under the influence of mass media, increased participation of women in the workforce, and advances in food technology, which have reduced the prevalence of labor-intensive dishes and traditional winter food preparations (Sabbağ & Boğan, 2022; Boztepe & Şengül, 2024).

From a broader perspective, Turkish cuisine is characterized by strong regional variation, extensive use of yogurt, the prominence of pastries, and the importance of religious and social factors in shaping food practices. Meat dishes are often prepared with onion, tomato, and tomato paste, while kebabs, stews, and ceremonial foods hold an important place in the culinary repertoire. Although flavor has traditionally been prioritized over visual presentation, recent culinary developments have increased attention to plating and visual aesthetics. At the same time, dishes made with similar ingredients may differ significantly across regions depending on local agricultural and animal resources (Güler, 2007; Kızıldemir et al., 2014; Girgin et al., 2017).

These characteristics indicate that Turkish cuisine should not be regarded as a fixed or uniform culinary system. Instead, it is a dynamic and internally diverse tradition in which common structures coexist with strong local variation.

2.2. Egyptian cuisine

Egyptian cuisine reflects a historically layered culinary tradition shaped by geography, water resources, trade, and cultural interaction. Spices have played an important role in Egyptian cooking, enhancing aroma, supporting digestion, and stimulating appetite. Coriander and cardamom, for example, have long been associated with Egyptian culinary practice (Mehdawy, 2006). The cuisine includes nationally recognized dishes such as *koshary* and *ful*, and is strongly associated with bread, *meze*-type accompaniments, and carbohydrate-rich meal structures (Nenes, 2009).

Generally, Egyptian cuisine is described as relying heavily on vegetable oil, garlic, onion, and spice-forward flavor profiles. It is also known for bread-based eating habits, solid rather than soup-based meal structures, and influences from Arab, Moroccan, and Ottoman cuisines. Meals are typically organized around a main dish accompanied by *mezes* and complementary items, and culinary practice demonstrates both continuity and adaptation over time (Wilson, 1988; Riolo, 2010; Leheta, 2021; Kılınc & Kılınc, 2021). Like Turkish cuisine, Egyptian cuisine is best understood not as a single stable entity but as a culinary system shaped by both continuity and adaptation. Its regional and historical layers are especially important when comparing dishes that appear structurally similar across culinary traditions.

2.3. Shared culinary structures and comparative gap

The literature on Turkish and Egyptian cuisines indicates that both traditions are well documented individually. Existing studies typically address their historical development, cultural significance, characteristic ingredients, or general food structures. However, these studies usually examine each cuisine separately. Far less attention has been given to direct comparative analysis of shared dishes based on concrete recipe structures, ingredient choices, and preparation techniques.

This gap is significant for two reasons. First, broad statements about common heritage or historical interaction remain abstract unless examined at the level of actual dishes. Second, structurally similar dishes may differ in meaningful ways when ingredient logic, seasoning patterns, texture, and preparation methods are compared in detail. A recipe-based comparison therefore reveals not only continuity and overlap, but also localization and culinary differentiation.

2.4. Relevance for tourism and hospitality

This comparative perspective is also relevant to tourism and hospitality. Recent research shows that local gastronomy plays an important role in destination attractiveness, regional identity, and tourism experience design. Local cuisine can strengthen a destination's image, enrich the visitor experience, and support place-branding strategies when presented as a culturally meaningful component of the destination rather than as a purely functional consumption item (Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arróspide, 2024).

Recent scholarship on memorable gastro-tourism experiences also shows that authenticity, local culture, sensory qualities, social interaction, aesthetics, and hospitable service are among the main dimensions through which food becomes meaningful in tourism contexts (García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). This is particularly relevant for the present study, as dish-level comparison helps explain how local distinctiveness is constructed not only through broad cuisine labels but also through specific ingredients, textures, and preparation methods.

The hospitality literature further suggests that traditional restaurants and their menus can serve as tools for regional heritage communication. Research on regional food and wine pairing in traditional restaurant menus shows that local food presentation can actively support the promotion of regional heritage and identity (Dimitrovski et al., 2024). In this sense, understanding how similar dishes diverge across related culinary traditions is useful not only for comparative gastronomy but also for menu design, culinary storytelling, and cross-cultural food presentation in hospitality settings.

More broadly, recent studies in gastronomic tourism show that food-based experiences are increasingly linked to tourist well-being, perceived authenticity, and emotional connection. Gastronomic tourism is therefore not only about tasting local food but also about engaging with place, culture, and experience in an emotionally meaningful way (Khan et al., 2025).

2.5. Study positioning

In this context, the contribution of the present study is to compare selected shared dishes from Turkish and Egyptian cuisines using recurring analytical dimensions such as ingredient composition, preparation techniques, flavoring patterns, texture, and cultural context. This approach makes it possible to identify how related dishes are adapted differently within each culinary tradition. At the same time, the study offers a perspective that may be useful for tourism and hospitality, particularly where food is presented as part of destination identity, menu development, and culturally framed visitor experiences.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The study employs a qualitative comparative research design based on document analysis. Document analysis was chosen because the study examines written culinary materials rather than relying on direct observation or interviews. In this context, recipes are considered not only practical instructions but also textual representations of culinary practice, ingredient logic, and food-related preferences (Balaban Sali, 2012).

3.2. Case selection

The comparison focuses on five dish pairs commonly found in both Turkish and Egyptian culinary traditions: Mercimek Çorbası / Shorbat Ads, Muhammara / Muhammara, Kabak Dolması / Kousa Mahshi, Revani / Basboosa, and Lokma / Zalabya. These dish pairs were selected based on three criteria: each dish had to be clearly recognizable in both cuisines, represent a major food category such as soup, appetizer, main course, or dessert, and be sufficiently documented in available textual sources to allow structured comparison. This selection enabled the comparison of dish pairs that are both culturally meaningful and analytically comparable across the two culinary traditions.

3.3. Data sources and analytical procedure

The study draws on three types of sources: cookbooks and culinary reference books, academic or scholarly publications, and widely used culinary websites. The analysis is based on selected documentary sources that provide clear and comparable descriptions of ingredients, preparation methods, and culinary context for each dish pair.

When more than one recipe version was consulted during background reading, these additional versions were used only to support general orientation and contextual understanding. However, the comparative summaries reported in the Results section were constructed from the principal documentary sources listed in Table 1. These sources were chosen because they offered detailed and comparable representations of the dishes in the two culinary traditions.

The comparison used five predefined analytical dimensions: ingredient composition, cooking techniques, flavoring patterns, texture characteristics, and cultural context. These dimensions were applied consistently across all five dish pairs to enable a structured comparison between the Turkish and Egyptian versions.

The analytical procedure involved three steps. First, the selected sources were grouped by dish pair and cuisine. Second, ingredient lists, preparation features, and contextual notes were extracted from the source material. Third, the extracted material was compared according to the analytical dimensions listed above. The aim was not to establish definitive national versions of the dishes, but to compare documented and representative forms of selected shared dishes within the two culinary traditions. These additional versions informed the contextual reading of the dishes, but only the principal documentary sources listed in Table 1 were used in the structured comparative summaries reported in the Results section.

Table 1. Principal Documentary Sources and Analytical Focus By Dish Pair

Dish Pair	Principal Turkish Source	Principal Egyptian Source	Main Analytical Focus
Mercimek Çorbası / Shorbat Ads	MEGEP (2019)	Blomgren (2018)	Ingredient base, thickening, aromatics, soup body
Muhammara / Muhammara	Yemek.com (n.d.-a)	Riolo (2010)	Pepper treatment, paste use, acidity, texture
Kabak Dolması / Kousa Mahshi	Yemek.com (n.d.-b)	Munaty Cooking (n.d.)	Stuffing composition, cooking liquid, aromatics
Revani / Basboosa	Şavkay (2000)	Riolo (2010)	Syrup structure, batter composition, texture
Lokma / Zalabya	Nefis Yemek Tarifleri (n.d.)	Mehdawy & Hussein (2010)	Shaping, frying, syrup application, cultural use

Source: Author's own results

3.4. Limitations

The study has several limitations. Recipes vary by region, household, and author, making standardization difficult. In addition, the availability of comparable printed and digital sources differs by dish. Therefore, the findings should be understood as a comparison of selected documented versions of shared dishes, not as a complete account of either cuisine.

4. Results

This section presents the comparative findings for the five selected dish pairs. For each case, the Turkish and Egyptian versions are compared using the same analytical dimensions: core base, supporting ingredients, seasoning, fat or cooking medium where relevant, texture tendency, and culinary context. This structure allows the similarities and differences between the two culinary traditions to be examined consistently across dish categories.

4.1. Lentil soup: mercimek çorbası and shorbat ads

Lentil soup serves as a useful starting point for comparison because it is a widely recognized staple in both Turkish and Egyptian culinary traditions. Although both versions are based on lentils and simple everyday ingredients, documented recipes indicate meaningful differences in texture, supporting ingredients, and aromatic composition.

Table 2. Comparative structure of lentil soup: Mercimek Çorbası and Shorbat Ads

Analytical Dimension	Turkish Version	Egyptian Version
Core base	Red lentils, onion, carrot, water or broth	Red lentils, onion, carrot, water
Supporting ingredients	Potato and flour	Tomato, garlic, coriander, chicken bouillon
Seasoning	Salt, black pepper, cumin	Salt, black pepper, garlic, coriander
Fat / enrichment	Vegetable oil	Vegetable oil
Texture tendency	Thicker and smoother	Lighter and more fluid
Culinary context	Staple soup; broad meal role	Comfort soup within everyday meals

Source: MEGEP, 2019; Blomgren, 2018

Both Turkish and Egyptian lentil soups rely on red lentils, onion, and basic seasonings, suggesting a shared foundation based on affordability and nutritional value. However, the two versions differ in supporting ingredients and flavor profiles. The Turkish version commonly includes flour and potato, which create a thicker consistency. The Egyptian version features tomato, garlic, coriander, and chicken bouillon, resulting in a more aromatic and savory profile.

The Turkish soup tends to have a smoother, thicker texture, while the Egyptian soup is comparatively lighter. The contrast lies not in the core identity of the dish, but in how texture and aroma are developed. Culturally, both serve as staple comfort foods, though the Turkish version is more strongly associated with a broad meal role, while the Egyptian version is more clearly positioned as part of everyday main-meal consumption.

4.2. Muhammara

Muhammara is a clear example of a shared dish structure within the broader Eastern Mediterranean culinary tradition. Because the dish relies heavily on flavor balance and ingredient layering, it provides a useful comparison of how the two cuisines construct intensity, acidity, and texture.

Table 3. Comparative Structure of Muhammara in Turkish and Egyptian Cuisines

Analytical Dimension	Turkish Version	Egyptian Version
Core base	Red pepper, walnuts, breadcrumbs, olive oil, garlic, pomegranate molasses	Red pepper, walnuts, breadcrumbs, olive oil, garlic, pomegranate molasses
Supporting ingredients	Tomato paste, pepper paste	Lemon juice
Seasoning	Black pepper, cumin	Hot pepper, salt, lemon-driven acidity
Texture tendency	Thicker and more concentrated	Smoother and lighter
Preparation emphasis	Roasted pepper and paste depth	Simpler blend and fresher acidity
Culinary context	Meze in domestic and commercial settings	Spread or accompaniment in everyday meals

Source: Yemek.com, n.d.; Riolo, 2010

Muhammara in both cuisines centers on red pepper, walnuts, breadcrumbs, olive oil, garlic, and pomegranate molasses, reflecting a shared Eastern Mediterranean foundation. The main differences are in flavor layering and preparation focus. The Turkish version often includes tomato paste, pepper paste, cumin, and black pepper, creating a denser and more intense flavor profile. The Egyptian version is simpler, relying more on acidity from lemon juice and a lighter seasoning structure.

As a result, the Turkish version is typically thicker and more concentrated, while the Egyptian version is smoother and lighter. The distinction lies not in the identity of the dish but in culinary emphasis: intensity and paste depth in the Turkish version, freshness and simplicity in the Egyptian.

4.3. Stuffed zucchini: Kabak dolması and Kousa mahshi

Stuffed zucchini is an important point of comparison because it is part of a broader regional tradition of stuffed vegetables found in several culinary cultures. In this case, the main interest is in how a shared format is adapted through different cooking liquids, seasoning practices, and meal contexts.

Table 4. Comparative Structure of Stuffed Zucchini: Kabak Dolması and Kousa Mahshi

Analytical Dimension	Turkish Version	Egyptian Version
Core base	Zucchini, rice, ground beef	Zucchini, rice, ground meat
Supporting ingredients	Tomato, tomato paste, onion, parsley, water	Tomato puree, garlic, chicken or beef bouillon
Seasoning	Salt, black pepper, mint	Garlic and broth-based aromatics
Fat / cooking medium	Sunflower oil and tomato-based liquid	Broth-oriented cooking liquid
Texture tendency	Softer, cohesive filling	Slightly looser filling depending on liquid
Culinary context	Family meals; often linked to ceremonial dolma culture	Family meals; more integrated into everyday home cooking

Source: Yemek.com, n.d.; Munaty Cooking, n.d.

Stuffed zucchini in both cuisines shares the same core structure: zucchini filled mainly with rice and ground meat. This reflects a broader regional tradition of stuffed vegetables. The differences lie in the flavoring and cooking methods. The Turkish version relies more on tomato and tomato paste, while the Egyptian version includes garlic and broth-based flavor elements.

The Turkish version emphasizes a tomato-based savory depth, while the Egyptian version develops a more aromatic, broth-driven profile. In both cases, simmering is central, but the approach to flavoring differs. Culturally, both versions are associated with family meals and shared eating, although Turkish dolma has stronger ceremonial associations, while Egyptian kousa mahshi is more closely tied to everyday domestic cooking.

4.4. Semolina cake: Revani and Basboosa

Semolina cake is especially useful for comparison because it combines a common dessert framework with visible local variations in syrup, batter composition, and expected texture. In this case, the similarities are clear at the structural level, while the differences appear more strongly in sensory outcome and culinary use.

Table 5. Comparative Structure of Semolina Cake: Revani and Basboosa

Analytical Dimension	Turkish Version	Egyptian Version
Shared dessert base	Semolina-based baked dessert with post-baking syrup	Semolina-based baked dessert with post-baking syrup
Key batter components	Semolina, sugar, butter, eggs, yogurt	Semolina, sugar, butter, flour, baking powder
Aromatics / garnish	Less aromatically marked in the cited version	Flower water and peeled almonds
Syrup logic	Lighter syrup, often moderated with lemon	Sweeter and more concentrated syrup
Texture tendency	Softer, more porous, lighter mouthfeel	Denser, firmer, slightly grainier structure
Culinary context	Traditional and ceremonial dessert	Festive but also everyday dessert

Source: Şavkay, 2000; Riolo, 2010

Revani and basboosa both feature a semolina-based dessert structure and are soaked with syrup after baking, which strongly suggests a common regional dessert tradition. However, the two desserts differ in their supporting ingredients and resulting textures. The Turkish version includes yogurt and eggs, while the Egyptian version uses a simpler, denser mixture with flour, baking powder, flower water, and an almond garnish. The syrups also differ: the Turkish syrup is typically lighter and balanced with lemon, while the Egyptian syrup is more concentrated and sweeter.

Texture is a key point of distinction. Revani is softer and more porous, while basboosa is firmer and more compact. These differences show how a common semolina dessert base can be adapted through variations in batter composition, syrup intensity, and desired mouthfeel.

4.5. Dough call: Lokma and Zalabya

Among the five dish pairs, lokma and zalabya exhibit one of the strongest structural similarities. Their comparison is especially useful because the common dough base is clear, while differences appear in shaping, sweetening, presentation, and cultural role.

Table 6. Comparative Structure of Dough Ball: Lokma and Zalabya

Analytical Dimension	Turkish Version	Egyptian Version
Core dough base	Flour, water, yeast, salt	Flour, water, yeast, salt
Sweetening components	Sugar-based syrup after frying	Honey and/or syrup-like sweetening after frying
Fat / cooking method	Deep-fried in oil	Deep-fried in oil
Shaping	More regular portioning	More irregular or freer shaping
Texture tendency	Crisp exterior, soft interior, glossy finish	Crisp exterior, airy interior, slightly lighter finish
Culinary context	Religious and communal distribution	Festive dessert and street-food use

Source: Nefis Yemek Tarifleri, n.d.; Mehdawy & Hussein, 2010

Lokma and zalabya are both made from a fermented dough of flour, water, yeast, and salt, then fried and sweetened. This makes them among the clearest examples of shared structural identity in the corpus. The differences are mainly in sweetening method, shaping, and presentation. Lokma is typically soaked more directly in syrup and is associated with more regular shapes. Zalabya allows for more irregular forms and a somewhat lighter approach to sweetening, depending on how sweetness is applied.

Culturally, lokma has strong ties to communal and religious distribution in Turkish culinary culture, while zalabya is more closely associated with festive consumption and street-food dessert culture in

Egypt. These differences show that even when the technical base is highly similar, the cultural life of the dish may diverge significantly.

4.6. Cross-case synthesis

Across the five dish pairs, the comparison shows that Turkish and Egyptian cuisines often share a common structural culinary base but diverge in supporting ingredients, seasoning logic, texture construction, and culinary context. Similarities are strongest at the level of dish identity and general preparation logic, while differences become more apparent in how flavor is layered, textures are achieved, and dishes are positioned within everyday, festive, or ceremonial food culture. These recurring patterns suggest that culinary similarity exists alongside strong processes of localization.

5. Discussion

The comparative analysis of the selected dish pairs shows that Turkish and Egyptian cuisines share recognizable culinary structures but differ in how these structures are localized through ingredient choices, seasoning methods, texture development, and culinary context. In all five cases, the strongest similarities are found in the dish's basic identity and general preparation logic, while the most significant differences arise from supporting ingredients, flavor layering, and sensory outcomes. This supports the idea that shared dishes should not be seen as fixed cultural equivalents, but as adaptive culinary forms that take on distinct local expressions within related food traditions (Taşpınar & Demirkol, 2021; Riolo, 2010).

One of the clearest recurring patterns concerns the relationship between a shared structural base and localized flavor construction. For lentil soup, the common use of lentils, onion, and basic seasonings reflects a shared regional logic of economical, nourishing, everyday food. However, the Turkish version achieves a thicker and smoother texture with ingredients such as flour and potato, while the Egyptian version develops a more aromatic and savory profile with tomato, garlic, coriander, and bouillon. A similar pattern appears in stuffed zucchini, where the shared format of vegetable stuffing masks important differences in cooking liquid, aromatic emphasis, and overall meal context. These findings suggest that culinary commonality in the region often operates through shared formats rather than identical flavor systems.

A second important pattern concerns texture as a marker of culinary differentiation. The comparison shows that differences between the Turkish and Egyptian versions extend beyond ingredients; they also influence the expected sensory profile of the dish. This is especially evident in semolina cake and fried dough desserts. Revani and basboosa both feature a semolina-and-syrup structure, but differ in batter composition, syrup intensity, and resulting mouthfeel. Similarly, lokma and zalabya share a fried dough base, but differ in shaping, sweetening practices, and finish. These distinctions demonstrate that culinary adaptation is not only additive but also textural: local traditions shape how a dish should feel, not just how it should taste.

The findings also show that culinary context is as important as ingredient variation. In several cases, the Turkish and Egyptian versions of a dish occupy different social and cultural roles. For example, Turkish dolma and lokma are more closely associated with ceremonial or communal traditions, while Egyptian kousa mahshi and zalabya are more integrated into everyday domestic or street-food settings. This supports the view that culinary identity is shaped not only by recipe structure, but also by how dishes circulate within social life and food culture (Wilson, 1988; Mehdawy, 2006; Sabbağ & Boğan, 2022).

These results are also relevant from a tourism and hospitality perspective. Recent research has emphasized that local gastronomy contributes to destination attractiveness, regional identity, and the creation of meaningful visitor experiences. In tourism contexts, dishes are consumed not only as food items but also as carriers of authenticity, memory, place identity, and heritage communication. Studies have shown that local cuisine can strengthen destination branding and support tourism development when culinary distinctiveness is visible and interpretable to visitors (Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arróspide, 2024). Similarly, research on memorable gastro-tourism experiences has highlighted the importance of

authenticity, local culture, sensory richness, and contextual meaning in shaping tourism value (García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024).

Within this broader context, the present findings suggest that dish-level comparison may be useful for gastronomy tourism and hospitality practice because it helps explain how similar dishes can express different local identities. This is practically relevant for restaurants, hospitality operators, and destination managers who work with culinary storytelling, cross-cultural menu presentation, and heritage-based gastronomy products. Research on traditional restaurant menus has shown that local food presentation can serve as a form of regional heritage promotion, particularly when menus communicate distinctiveness rather than generic similarity (Dimitrovski et al., 2024). From this perspective, the comparative analysis of Turkish and Egyptian dishes may help clarify how culinary overlap can coexist with destination-specific expression.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The study relies entirely on secondary textual sources, including cookbooks, academic works, and culinary websites. Consequently, the analysis reflects documented and commonly represented versions of the dishes rather than the full diversity of household, regional, or professional culinary practices. Recipes are inherently variable, and not all versions are equally visible in published or digital form. Therefore, the study should not be seen as establishing definitive national versions of the selected dishes, but rather as identifying recurring patterns within documented culinary representations.

Overall, the study demonstrates that recipe-based comparison can provide a useful framework for examining both shared culinary heritage and local differentiation. By focusing on concrete dish structures rather than only broad cultural narratives, the analysis helps reveal how related culinary traditions diverge through ingredients, preparation methods, texture, and cultural use. This not only strengthens comparative gastronomy as a field of inquiry, but also offers insights relevant to tourism and hospitality, where food increasingly serves as a medium of cultural interpretation and destination experience.

Conclusions, theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future research

This study examined selected shared dishes in Turkish and Egyptian culinary traditions using a structured comparative framework based on ingredient composition, preparation techniques, flavoring patterns, texture characteristics, and cultural context. The findings show that the selected dish pairs share a recognizable structural foundation but diverge in meaningful ways through localized ingredient use, seasoning logic, texture construction, and culinary positioning. These differences indicate that culinary similarity should not be interpreted as culinary sameness; rather, shared dishes may function as adaptive forms that reflect common regional heritage while also expressing distinct local identities (Taşpınar & Demirkol, 2021; Riolo, 2010).

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to comparative gastronomy by demonstrating the value of a dish-based analytical framework. Existing literature on Turkish and Egyptian cuisines has largely focused on historical development, general culinary characteristics, or broad cultural narratives, while offering limited side-by-side analysis of concrete dish structures. By comparing dishes through recurring analytical dimensions, the study shows how culinary traditions may converge at the structural level but diverge through supporting ingredients, flavor logic, and social use. In this sense, the article contributes to the literature by shifting attention from broad culinary descriptions to a more focused comparison of how related dishes are localized in practice. This supports the argument that food traditions should be understood not only through macro-level cultural narratives but also through the concrete internal logic of recipes and preparation (Güler, 2007; Kızıldemir et al., 2014; Wilson, 1988; Riolo, 2010).

The findings are also relevant to tourism and hospitality research. Recent studies have shown that gastronomy plays a significant role in destination attractiveness, destination image, and regional identity, especially when local dishes are presented as meaningful cultural expressions rather than generic food products. Research has also demonstrated that authenticity, local culture, sensory richness, and contextual interpretation are central to memorable gastronomic experiences (Recuero-Virto & Valilla Arróspide, 2024; García-Pérez & Castillo-Ortiz, 2024). In this context, the present study

suggests that dish-level comparison can help explain how culinary distinctiveness is constructed and communicated, which is relevant for gastronomy tourism, heritage interpretation, and hospitality contexts where food is part of a broader destination experience.

From a practical perspective, the study may be useful for hospitality professionals, restaurateurs, and tourism practitioners involved in menu design, culinary storytelling, and destination branding. When dishes appear similar across related culinary traditions, their local differences may easily be overlooked or misrepresented in tourism and restaurant settings. The present findings indicate that even small differences in syrup logic, texture, spice structure, garnish, or cooking medium can shape the culinary identity of a dish in meaningful ways. For hospitality practice, this means that culturally sensitive menu development should not rely solely on broad dish labels, but also on the specific local forms through which dishes are prepared and interpreted. Such an approach may support more accurate heritage representation and more distinctive gastronomy-based tourism products (Dimitrovski et al., 2024).

At the same time, the study has several limitations. First, the analysis relies entirely on secondary textual sources, including cookbooks, academic works, and culinary websites. As a result, the findings reflect documented and commonly represented versions of the selected dishes rather than the full range of household, regional, or professional culinary practices. Second, recipes are inherently variable, and not all variants are equally visible in published or digital sources. Third, the study focuses on a limited number of dish pairs and does not aim to represent Turkish and Egyptian cuisines as complete systems. For these reasons, the findings should be interpreted as a structured comparison of selected documented forms rather than as definitive statements about national cuisines as a whole.

These limitations also suggest directions for future research. Further studies could expand the comparison to a broader range of dishes and include additional culinary traditions from the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. More importantly, future research could combine document analysis with primary methods such as interviews with chefs, household cooks, or culinary historians, as well as experimental cooking trials or sensory evaluations. Such approaches would allow a more direct examination of how authenticity, variation, and localization are negotiated in practice. Future work could also explore more explicitly how shared dishes are adapted in tourism and hospitality settings, including restaurant menus, destination marketing, and visitor-oriented culinary interpretation. This would deepen the connection between comparative gastronomy and tourism studies by showing more clearly how culinary heritage is transformed into hospitality and destination experiences.

Overall, the study demonstrates that recipe-based comparison is a useful method for examining both common heritage and local differentiation. By focusing on the internal structure of dishes rather than solely on general culinary narratives, it shows how Turkish and Egyptian cuisines can be understood as historically connected yet distinctly localized food traditions. In this way, the article contributes not only to comparative gastronomy but also to broader discussions of food, identity, heritage, and cultural experience within tourism and hospitality.

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