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A Culinary Offering from Turkey: Nationalism with a Cosmopolitan Dressing

The connection between food (or cuisine) and nationalism is very much evident and has been dealt with in a considerable number of scholarly studies. In this paper, I study Turkish cuisine as a national symbol, and the ways in which it produces, reproduces, negotiates, and/or subverts the mainstream discourses of Turkish nationalism. Therefore, rather than repeating or reproducing general approaches concerning food nationalism, I look at how food or cuisine becomes a contested area where ideas of belonging, identity, history, and nationalism have been debated. In relation to the "constructional" practices of Turkish national cuisine— that include identity- and/or nation-building practices— cosmopolitanism comes up as an important concept. This paper argues that cosmopolitanism is connected to a particular form of nationalism, and the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in this context is constructed around "cosmopolitanism for nationalism." In this paper, I look at the problematic conceptualization of "cosmopolitanism for nationalism" as well as the limits and extensions of the discourses of nationalism in culinary writings in books, magazines, and newspapers.