



COURTESY OF IM JONHONDA

Coban kavurma is a traditional Turkish dish made of chopped lamb, tomatoes, green peppers and onions seasoned with cumin, served with rice.

# TEMPTING TURKISH CUISINE

BY NICHOLAS GILMAN  
Special to The News

For chowhounds like me, the opening of Mexico City's first Turkish restaurant is welcome news.

A few months ago, three friends, Burak Ozsailman, Cenk Oba and Ozkan Alkan, arrived from Turkey with little more than their suitcases and a good idea. The result is "Istanbul Turkish Cuisine," a comfortable, unpretentious place with an outdoor seating area a few blocks north of Reforma, serving authentic Turkish cuisine.

A large Turkish-speaking family occupied one of the tables during our last visit – always a good omen in a foreign restaurant.

Turkish food is characterized by the use of lots of fresh vegetables, smaller servings of meat or fish, and the judicious use of herbs and spices. Some diners used to spicier Mexican food might find it bland, but I found it subtle and savory.

Like Mexicans, Turks enjoy spending a lot of time over their meals, which are served as a big feast, with many plates set on the table at once. Mese (small appetizers) are the specialty here, and "Istanbul" offers over 150 varieties of them, although only seven or eight are offered at any given time

**'Istanbul'** offers authentic, home-style food with more than 150 varieties of appetizers to choose from in a laid-back atmosphere



The restaurant specializes in mese, or small appetizers.

– the menu changes with the seasons.

I liked the maydanoz salatasi, a salad, similar to tabouleh, made with parsley, cracked wheat and good olive oil. The patlican salatasi, a smoky, roasted eggplant dip, and the manca, spinach in yogurt, were fresh and flavorful.

A dozen main dishes are offered, including kebabs and parrilladas (grilled meats) –

mostly lamb, which is unusual in Mexico. There are several fish options, including a roasted fish of the day – all served with vegetables or salad.

Under platillos caseros, you will find coban kavurma, chopped lamb with tomatoes, onions and green pepper, served with cumin, fragrant with rice. Desserts such as the postre de chabacano estilo turco (dried apricots in car-

**MORE INFO**

Check out this new eatery near Reforma.

#### Istanbul Turkish Cuisine

Rto Pinarco 161, Colonia

Cuauhtémoc

Tel. 5511-2482

Open daily 11:30-1 a.m.

\$200-250 per person

amel sauce, served with rich, eggy homemade ice cream) or baked rice pudding, are well worth the calories.

This is home-style food, nothing fancy in its concept or presentation, but undoubtedly authentic. Prices are reasonable, and the service is friendly. Both our Mexican waitress and one of the Turkish owners were very helpful in explaining the menu and style of eating Turkish food. "Istanbul" is a welcome addition to the ever-expanding restaurant scene here in Mexico City.

Nicholas Gilman is author of *Good Food in Mexico City: A Guide to Food, Sights, Festivals and Fine Dining* [www.mexicocityfood.net](http://www.mexicocityfood.net)