

IN THE OTTOMAN PALACE WERE ENVOYS GIVEN FISH KEBAB AND FISH SOUP BY OFFICIALS? A BOOK OF REGISTERS AND SOME MENUS FROM THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY

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Secondary research on early modern Ottoman court feasts and royal kitchens frequently focuses on the kinds and quantities of food provided to the Ottoman palace. This is partly due to the fact that historical records and/or contemporary narrative sources often fail to capture the actual meals that were served during Ottoman court rituals and popular celebrations. However, in the last two decades, several new researches have offered comprehensive details regarding meals served during various occasions at the Ottoman palace. These investigations increase our understanding of the types of food served at the palace, shifting dietary preferences, and food-related protocol rules.

This presentation will examine an unstudied book of registers from among the documents of the superintendence of imperial kitchens (Matbah-i amire eminliđi), which provides vivid information about food served to foreign envoys during Ottoman court banquets in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The registers include food allowance lists as well as some menus served to the Indian, Austrian, Venetian, Russian, and Safavid envoys, who visited the Ottoman palace between 1717 and 1722, respectively. The presentation's main focus will be on the various fish and fish-related courses that are prominently represented in the registers and that seem to have grown in popularity over time during feasts for foreign envoys to the Ottoman capital, a trend which seem to have begun by the middle of the seventeenth century. Additionally, it will be discussed how the envoys' political/diplomatic statuses can be inferred from and maintained by the food that is served.