

## Exploring Iconic Foods of Hatay Cuisine as a Cultural Identity \*\*

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### Abstract

Since food is important to define and embody the gastronomic characteristics of a place, it is considered as part of the cultural capital that represents the expression of a country, society and history. Therefore, the symbolic foods of the region form the basis of the culinary culture. Iconic foods culturally encompass historical depth, skills, knowledge, eating habits, and other traditions. Although it varies from culture to culture, foods that reflect the values of the countries or regions are seen as a symbol of cultural identity. In this context the main purpose of the current research is to determine what is the iconic foods in Hatay cuisine, where the variety of food is very high. For this purpose study is an exploratory research. The data related to the research were collected between April 30 - May 15 2023 by means of a questionnaire. In total, 412 questionnaires were obtained from public of Hatay. The results of the this study shows the potential of 55 the iconic dishes in Hatay cuisine. Origins of these foods and their cultural values shows that the of iconic dishes in Hatay cuisine is a symbol of cultural identity.

### Article Type

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## INTRODUCTION

Food and gastronomy are distinctive cultural components of many ethnic groups and nations. For this reason, food is used by societies as a cultural identity regardless of the geographical, social and political differences that separate people. In multicultural societies, it is important to have a common gastronomy identity that will represent the image of a community, especially in terms of tradition and originality. Local and traditional foods are closely related to the gastronomic heritage and have started to play an important role in the life of the society and the individual. On the other hand, it can be said that gastronomy, which has gained great importance as a tourism product, has a key function in increasing the recognition and preservation of regional dishes. In this context, food is usually part of a physiological, sensory, social and cultural environment. The fact that the dishes of a country or region are equipped with the geographical and cultural characteristics of that country gives that food a function. For example, food is often positioned as a religious-national symbol, a means of sharing, a status determinant or a cultural symbol/identity. As a cultural symbol, food applies to the culinary heritage of a particular geographical region or community and is seen as an element of identity by which the people of the region identify themselves. For this reason, icon foods have the meaning of past, present and future for the societies to which they belong.

The province of Hatay is located in the heart of the Amik plain in the southern region of Turkey. It served as the Silk and Spice Route's gateway to the Mediterranean and was the center of the spice trade for centuries. In addition to its favorable climate, it is stated that it affects and shapes the gastronomic identity of thirteen world civilizations (UNESCO, 2017). There are nearly 600 recipes in Hatay cuisine, thanks to the interaction with various civilizations for centuries and the favorable geographical conditions. The province of Hatay is one of the rare places where a concrete example of the concept of sustainable agricultural/natural product diversity and the concept of farm to fork can be seen easily. The historical past of the province still preserves its multicultural structure. With its natural and cultural values and the reflection of tradition in its culinary culture, Hatay received the title of UNESCO City of Gastronomy in 2017, and had the opportunity to promote and highlight its traditional flavors at national and international level.

There is an emerging interest in the themes of icon foods in the current literature. Raviv (2003) examined how Falafel becoming a national icon, Adema (2006) describes the role of gastronomic festivals in symbolizing food and giving an identity to the region. Berg (2006) considers New York City's iconic food of Jewish origin, Knepp (2010) considers the iconic function of Tamalada among Mexican immigrants and next-generation Mexican Americans in Texas, Radix and Jati (2014) examined Tumpeng (a cone-shaped rice-based ceremonial dish) as a symbol of Indonesian traditional cuisine, Ağlamaz and Öncüer Çivici (2018) identified the iconic dishes of İzmir, Kunasegaran, Rasoolimanesh, and Khan (2019) investigated tourists' healthy signature food experiences. In conclusion, the examples above show that local food is much more than just food, in that it reflects the culture, heritage, traditions and identity of the people.

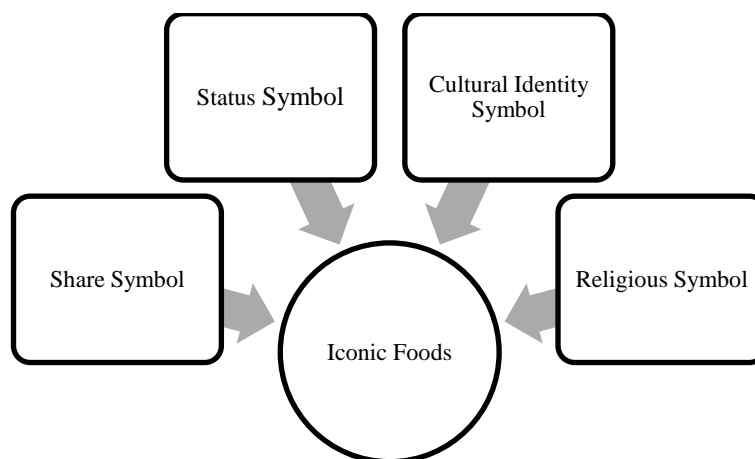
At this point, the fact that the food is more memorable and suitable for marketing constitutes an important criterion for destinations. It is thought that the importance and role of iconic foods with cultural value as a tourist attraction factor should be well defined and strategies to increase competition in gastronomy should continue on the foods of that region. It is predicted that in the near future, iconic foods becomes an important element that increases the recognition of destinations and facilitates marketing activities, especially in gastronomic tourism. On the other hand,

this link between food and place will not only benefit promotional and marketing efforts, but will also preserve local food culture and traditions (considering that food is a cultural object consumed for its iconic and aesthetic value). Within this context, it is posited that the identification of the emblematic gastronomic offerings of Hatay cuisine holds the potential to serve as a potent promotional mechanism, elucidating the geographical origins and cultural, historical, and social evolution of these culinary delights. This endeavour is anticipated to yield substantial contributions to the realm of gastronomy within the Hatay field and beyond. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze the iconic foods of Hatay cuisine as a cultural identity. In addition to the main objective of the research, there are sub-objectives. The sub-objectives are to contribute to the inventory of Turkish cuisine by defining the iconic foods in Hatay cuisine and to emphasize the importance of iconic foods as cultural identity. Consequently, the central research question has been formulated as follows: "What are the iconic foods of Hatay cuisine?" and "Are iconic foods of Hatay cuisine a cultural identity?" From this point of view, the importance of the research can be explained by considering the contribution to the literature and practice. In addition, it is predicted that by revealing the place of iconic foods in gastronomy, iconic foods will come to the fore within the scope of gastronomy tourism and will be beneficial to the field of application by helping to increase their recognition.

### Food Symbolism and Iconic Foods

The term icon was first used in the Middle Ages as a religious word to evoke images, figures, signs or objects representing sacred elements (Berg, 2021). In the dictionary meaning, a symbol is defined as a visible sign of something that cannot be expressed with the senses, or a person, object, event and idea that represents a quality (Türk Dil Kurumu Çağdaş Türkçe Sözlük, 2021). It is a concept that makes sense, represents or reminds anything by connection or having similar qualities in reality or thought (Oxford Dictionary, 2021).

In the 21st century, the term symbol refers not only to the object that represents something, but also to exaggerated attention, praise and idolization towards the object. It is possible to see examples of cultural symbols in movies, books, stories, clothes, music and food. Although symbol foods are grouped according to language, ethnicity, religious affiliation or ideological beliefs, they have various meanings for different human communities. On the other hand, within the scope of food symbolism, symbol foods; religious icon. It is seen that it is also classified as a symbol of sharing, a symbol of status and a symbol expressing cultural identity (Bessière, 1998; Beşirli, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Food Symbolism

**Source:** Compiled and created by the authors.

Edward Sapir defined culture as “the unity of material and spiritual elements, practices and beliefs learned through a social process, which determines the structure (relationships) of society”. In this case, since the culture is the unity of material and spiritual elements, symbols reinforce the sense of belonging. This point of view enabled the symbols to be used in cultural elements (Koca, 2010, p. 90). Therefore, the main symbolic function of food and drink is to express cultural identity. The dietary behaviors of each community or group can generally depend on religious beliefs or ethnic identities. Food and beverages symbolizing a culture have a special meaning. For this reason, the view that food has a strong symbolic identity has become widespread (Koban, 2020, p.66).

Any object, action, event, expression, concept or image presents itself as a raw material for symbol formation anywhere and anytime. This is especially true for food and eating (Jones, 2007, p.133). For example, among the cultural factors that represent national identity, food is seen as a cultural symbol (Edles, 2004, p.62). From the viewpoint that our consumption shapes our identity, specifically in terms of food, it can be understood that we assimilate or adopt the characteristics of the food we eat. Likewise, when a society consumes certain types of food, it becomes intertwined with a particular culture. The act of eating situates society within a social framework and cultural structure, leading to distinctions and the establishment of a shared identity (Bessière, 1998, p.24).

Food symbolism emerges in the form of foods that are religious symbols, foods that are symbols of sharing, foods that are symbols of status, and foods that are accepted as cultural identity (Bessière, 1998, p.23). Food as a religious symbol forms the basis of beliefs and indicates symbolic virtue. Food and beverages, which are considered as symbols, represent many events. For example, wine symbolizes the blood of Jesus, bread symbolizes God's blessing, colored Easter eggs symbolizes fasting, unleavened bread symbolizes Judaism (Şahin, 2010, p.19). It may be possible to understand the beliefs and social structures of the society through food shared and eaten with others (business lunches, family celebrations, religious day meals, daily meals, etc.).

Symbol food can be considered as a status indicator. The social hierarchy stemming from the consumption of certain foods can refer to sitting at the table, eating the determined part of the meal, and being served in the order that is appreciated (Beşirli, 2011, p.150). Moreover, food is an effective tool that has become a symbol in gaining status, finding answers to class aspirations, and seeking hedonism (İflazoğlu & Ünlüönen, 2020, p.2610). For example, the consumption of caviar and champagne or the behavior of eating at a Michelin-starred restaurant or participating in wine and food tours are seen as status-determining signs. As a cultural identity, symbolic foods are valid for the culinary heritage of a particular geographical region or community, an identity that the inhabitants of a particular region represent and distinguish themselves from other regions (Bessière, 1998, pp.23). In similar vein, Sgroi, Modica, and Fusté-Forné (2022) in their study of street foods in the Italian city of Palermo, emphasized that street foods preserve and support the culinary history and traditions of the region. Also these foods are perceived as iconic foods by both local people and visitors and their gastronomic importance as a symbol of cultural identity.

As a matter of fact, when the iconic food is mentioned, it comes to mind a special dish recommended by the chef in restaurants, a dish that reflects the identity of the chef; for instance, Ferran Adria: Ferran's Rack of Lamb with Pistachio Pesto, José Andrés: Paella with Shrimp and Squid, Thomas Keller: Smoked Salmon Crisps, Jamie Oliver: Steak Sarnie, Gordon Ramsay: Beef Wellington etc. These include a meal prepared with a special cooking method in destinations, a meal that is a unique representation of its taste, a meal that reflects local or national culture. For example, Sushi symbolizes Japan, Kimchi Korea, Tortilla Mexico, Hamburger America, Doner Turkey, Maple Syrup

Canada (Berg, 2021). In the national context, examples include Turkish coffee, Italian pizza and pasta, French wine and cheese, Spanish tapas. In the local context, examples such as Alaskan salmon, California avocado toast, Gaziantep baklava, Antakya künefe, Kars cheddar, Van breakfast can be listed. In addition, the names given to dishes, sauces or desserts have become symbols by being inspired by the name of a person from the culinary professionals, aristocracy or art circle, who have an important place in the culinary field. For example, it is the French Count Béchamel, who named the bechamel sauce (Chefin Dictionary, 2022). Mornay sauce is named after Mornay, another aristocrat who lived in the 1600s (Food Reference, 2022). The famous meat dish Chateaubriand is named after the French count Chateaubriant (Myers, 2017). Pottage Hanry, made with chicken and steak pieces and flavored with broth, is named after the French King IV, Henry (Harborough Museum, 2021). While working at the Savoy hotel, Auguste Escoffier made one of his most famous recipes, Peach Melba, in honor of the famous Austrian singer Nellie Melba, who was a customer at the hotel at that time (Avey, 2012). Borani dish got its name from Buran, wife of Abbasid Caliph Me'mun (Ekinci, 2016). The meatballs that the Ottoman diplomat Müşir Davut (David) pasha, who was the governor of Lebanon in 1861-1869, had his cook made, bears his own name (Davut Paşa Meatballs) (Ünsal, 2015). As seen in the examples, certain foods are used as symbols to represent the values of both individuals and societies. Therefore, iconic foods help define both individual and social identity. For this reason, iconic foods can be considered contextually, often shaped by individual, national, regional, racial, religious and ethnic identities. Since it is suitable for the purpose of the research, the concept of iconic food is considered as a cultural symbol that reflects the identity of the local people in Hatay region.

## Materials and Methods

The main purpose of the current research is to explore iconic dishes in Hatay, where food diversity is very high, in the context of a cultural identity. This study, in which the quantitative method was used, is an exploratory research. The population of the study consists of 1.686,043 (TÜİK, 2022) individuals residing in the Hatay province. Since it is not possible to reach all individuals residing in Hatay, sampling was deemed appropriate. In this direction, Yamane's (2001) formula below was used to determine the number of samples:

$$n = \frac{1.686.043 \cdot (1.96)^2 \cdot (0.5) \cdot (0.5)}{1.686.043 \cdot (0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2 \cdot (0.5) \cdot (0.5)} = 384$$

A new questionnaire form was developed because there was no data collection tool for determining iconic foods in the literature. In order to ensure the content validity of the draft questionnaire statements, the content of the statements was subjected to the opinions of ten academics (April 1-20, 2023). The questionnaire was tested with a pilot application. As a result of the application carried out with 52 participants, no incomprehensibility was observed in the statements. The data related to the research were collected between April 30 and May 15 2023 by means of a questionnaire. In total, 412 questionnaires were obtained and all of them were evaluated. In the analysis of the obtained data, descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency, and arithmetic mean were used.

The ethics committee permission document required for the collection of data used in this study was obtained from Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Ethics Committee with the decision number E-11054618-302.08.01-171500 dated 15.03.2023.

## Reliability and Validity

Iconic foods in Hatay cuisine; determined the scale measured with a 5-point Likert type (1=strongly disagree...5=strongly agree). As a result of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability coefficient calculated as 0.986. In line with this coefficient, it is possible to say that the scale has high reliability. In the exploratory factor analysis applied to 11 categories in the iconic food data collection tool, it was found that the factor was collected in a single dimension and explained 67.396% of the total variance, as all 11 categories measured iconic foods. The result of the Bartlett test (Approx. Chi2: 5240,983 df: 91; Sig.: 0.000) showing the adequacy of the correlation between the variables was found to be significant. The KMO value, which indicates the adequacy of the sample number for analysis, was determined as 0.963. A value between 0.90 and 1.00 for KMO corresponds to a good rating (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2018).

## Findings

According to the information in Table 1, 254 of the participants were female and 158 were male. When the age status of the participants is analyzed, it is seen that the highest level is in the age range of 18–24 (117), 35–44 (108), and 25–34 (97), respectively. When the distribution of educational status is analyzed, it is seen that 230 participants have a bachelor's degree. In general, participation was realized in professions such as teacher, student, other, housewife, kitchen chef/restaurant owner, doctor/nurse, and academician.

**Table 1.** Participants' demographic profile (n: 412)

Variables	n	%	Variables	n	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Marital status</b>		
Famale	254	61.7	Married	222	53.9
Male	158	38.3	Single	190	46.1
<b>Age</b>			<b>Educational Status</b>		
18-24	117	28.4	Primary education	40	9.7
25-34	97	23.5	High school	62	15.0
35-44	108	26.2	Associate degree	41	10.0
45-54	66	16.0	Undergraduate	230	55.8
55 old and above	24	5.8	Graduate	39	9.5
<b>Professions</b>			<b>Income</b>		
Teacher (in various branches)	121	29.4	1250-5500TL	147	35.7
Student	76	18.4	5501-8500TL	40	9.7
Housewife	54	13.1	8501-10500 TL	35	8.5
Kitchen Chef / Restaurant owner	38	9.2	10501-15500 TL	95	23.1
Academician	29	7.0	15501 TL and above	95	23.1
Doctor/Nurse	29	7.0			
Other	65	15.8			

Table 2, 3 and 4 shows the frequency values, averages and standard deviations of the responses of the participants to the statements about the iconic food of Hatay cuisine.

**Table 2.** Iconic appetizers, soups, salad and pilafs of Hatay Cuisine

Q.1 Which of the following below do you think are the iconic food of Hatay cuisine?			1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Categories	Foods								
Appetizers	Humus is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine	f	5	7	28	39	333	4.67	.778
		%	1.2	1.7	6.8	9.5	80.8		
	Abugannuç is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine	f	8	11	27	49	317	4.59	.876
		%	1.9	2.7	6.6	11.9	76.9		
	Cevizli biber is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine	f	10	13	41	80	268	4.41	.961
		%	2.4	3.2	10.0	19.4	65.0		
Soups	İçli köfte is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine.	f	11	16	46	64	275	4.39	1.009
		%	2.7	3.9	11.2	15.5	66.7		
	Sürk cheese is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine	f	16	19	46	48	283	4.36	1.096
		%	3.9	4.6	11.2	11.7	68.7		
	Sireysil is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine	f	27	25	61	76	223	4.07	1.232
		%	6.6	6.1	14.8	18.4	54.1		
Salads	Mahluta is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine	f	27	29	61	96	199	3.99	1.227
		%	6.6	7.0	14.8	23.3	48.3		
	Lebeniye is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine	f	8.0	8.7	19.7	22.3	41.3	3.80	1.282
		%	54	59	109	68	122		
	Borani is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine.	f	38	38	74	89	173	3.77	1.324
		%	9.2	9.2	18.0	21.6	42.0		
Pilafs	Mütebbele is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine	f	39	44	72	76	181	3.76	1.357
		%	9.5	10.7	17.5	18.4	43.9		
	Zahter is the iconic salad of Hatay cuisine.	f	6	6	15	87	298	4.61	.757
		%	1.5	1.5	3.6	21.1	72.3		
	Sürk is iconic salad of Hatay cuisine	f	6	8	22	86	290	4.56	.803
		%	1.5	1.9	5.3	20.9	70.4		
Pilafs	Zeytin is iconic salad of Hatay cuisine.	f	6	5	32	86	283	4.54	.808
		%	1.5	1.2	7.8	20.9	68.7		
	Sarmaiç is iconic salad of Hatay cuisine	f	13	15	36	93	255	4.36	1.002
		%	3.2	3.6	8.7	22.6	61.9		
	Zerzevat iconic salad of Hatay cuisine	f	24	30	57	108	193	4.01	1.194
		%	5.8	7.3	13.8	26.2	46.8		
Pilafs	Mercimekli Bulgur is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine	f	13	18	60	87	234	4.24	1.057
		%	3.2	4.4	14.6	21.1	56.8		
	Firik is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine	f	18	26	87	112	169	3.94	1.125
		%	4.4	6.3	21.1	27.2	41.0		
	Meyhane is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine.	f	13	18	84	115	157	3.86	1.153
		%	4.4	9.2	20.4	27.9	38.1		
Pilafs	Nohutlu Etli Bulgur is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine	f	26	40	85	107	154	3.78	1.222
		%	6.3	9.7	20.6	26.0	37.4		
Pilafs	Kepse is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine	f	26	41	81	111	153	3.78	1.221
		%	6.3	10.0	19.7	26.9	37.1		

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither agree nor disagree 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

The arithmetic averages for the iconic appetizers of Hatay cuisine; “Humus is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.67$ ), “Abugannuç is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.59$ ), “Cevizli biber is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.41$ ), “İçli köfte is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ ), “Sürk cheese is iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.36$ ).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic soups of Hatay cuisine; “Sireysil is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ ), “Mahluta is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ), “Lebeniye is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.80$ ), “Borani is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.77$ ), “Mütebbele is iconic soup of Hatay cuisine ( $\bar{x} = 3.76$ ).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic salads of Hatay cuisine; “Zahter is the iconic salad of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.67$ ), “Sürk is icon salad of Hatay cuisine ( $\bar{x} = 4.56$ ), “Zeytin is iconic salad of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.54$ ), “Sarmaiç is iconic salad of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.36$ ), and “Zerzevat iconic salad of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.01$ ).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic pilafs of Hatay cuisine; “Mercimekli Bulgur is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine ( $\bar{x} = 4.24$ ), “Firik is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.94$ ), “Meyhane is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.86$ ), “Nohutlu Etli Bulgur is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ ) and “Kepse is iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ ).

**Table 3.** Iconic vegetable dishes with olive oil-with meat, meat dishes and offals dishes of Hatay cuisine

Q. 2 Which of the following below do you think are the iconic food of Hatay cuisine?			1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Categories	Foods								
Vegetable dishes with olive oil	Libye is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine	f	20	26	55	101	210	4.10	1.151
		%	4.9	6.3	13.3	24.5	51.0		
	Sarma is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine	f	30	28	65	82	207	3.99	1.261
		%	7.3	6.8	15.8	19.9	50.2		
	Şih Mualla is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine.	f	18	32	76	99	187	3.98	1.159
		%	4.4	7.8	18.4	24.0	45.4		
	Dolma is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine	f	27	28	74	90	193	3.95	1.229
		%	6.6	6.8	18.0	21.8	46.8		
	Mukalla is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine	f	30	28	65	82	207	3.74	1.248
		%	7.3	6.8	15.8	19.9	50.2		
Vegetable dishes with meat	Şihl Mahşi is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine	f	17	17	50	94	234	4.24	1.082
		%	4.1	4.1	12.1	22.8	56.8		
	Dolma is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine.	f	26	26	63	91	206	4.03	1.214
		%	6.3	6.3	15.3	22.1	50.0		
	Sarma is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine.	f	27	25	60	95	205	4.03	1.215
		%	6.6	6.1	14.6	23.1	49.8		
	Borani is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine	f	35	27	64	85	201	3.94	1.292
		%	8.5	6.6	15.5	26.6	48.8		
	Eggplant dishes (such as; bastırma, oturtma, musakka) are iconic	f	39	32	81	102	158	3.74	1.297
	vegetable dishes with meat of Hatay cuisine	%	9.5	7.8	19.7	24.8	38.3		



**Table 3.** Iconic vegetable dishes with olive oil-with meat, meat dishes and offals dishes of Hatay cuisine (cont.)

<b>Meat dishes</b>	<b>Sini (Tepsi) Kebab is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>4.70</b>	<b>.750</b>
		%	1.7	1.7	2.4	12.6	81.6		
	Kâğıt (Lahme la Varka) Kebab is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine	<b>f</b>	7	7	11	59	328	4.68	.759
		%	1.7	1.7	2.7	14.3	79.6		
	Oruk is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.	<b>f</b>	6	8	19	64	315	4.63	.785
		%	1.5	1.9	4.6	15.5	76.5		
	Döner Kebab is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine	<b>f</b>	19	14	26	83	270	4.38	1.059
		%	4.6	3.4	6.3	20.1	65.5		
	Belen Tava is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.	<b>f</b>	12	18	33	110	239	4.32	.996
		%	2.9	4.4	8.0	26.7	58.0		
<b>Offals dishes</b>	Hamis is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine.	<b>f</b>	46	32	98	80	156	3.65	1.347
		%	11.2	7.8	23.8	19.4	37.9		
	Ciğer kebabı is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine	<b>f</b>	38	97	103	130	38	3.57	1.305
		%	9.2	23.5	25.0	31.6	9.2		
	Mumbar is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine	<b>f</b>	48	45	90	91	138	3.54	1.356
		%	11.7	10.9	21.8	22.1	33.5		
	İşkembe is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine	<b>f</b>	46	46	97	87	136	3.53	1.344
		%	11.2	11.2	23.5	21.1	33.0		
	Kelle Paça is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine	<b>f</b>	53	43	130	94	92	3.31	1.283
		%	12.9	10.4	31.6	22.8	22.3		

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither agree nor disagree 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

The arithmetic averages for the iconic vegetable dishes with olive oil of Hatay cuisine; “Libye is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine” ( $\bar{x} = 4.10$ ), “Sarma is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine” ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ), “Şıh Mualla is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.98$ ), “Dolma is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine” ( $\bar{x} = 3.95$ ), “Mukalla is iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.74$ ).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic vegetable dishes with meat of Hatay cuisine; “Şıhlı Mahşi is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.24$ ), “Dolma is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.03$ ), “Sarma is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.03$ ), “Borani is iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.94$ ), “Eggplant dishes (such as; bastırma, oturtma, musakka) are iconic vegetable dishes with meat of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.74$ ).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic meat dishes of Hatay cuisine; “Sini (Tepsi) Kebab is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.70$ ), Kâğıt (Lahme la Varka) Kebab is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.68$ ), Oruk is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.63$ ), Döner Kebab is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.38$ ), “Belen Tava is iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 4.32$ ).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic offals dishes of Hatay cuisine; “Hamis is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.65$ ), “Ciğer kebabı is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.57$ ), “Mumbar is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.54$ ), “İşkembe is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.53$ ), “Kelle Paça is iconic offals dish of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x} = 3.31$ ).

**Table 4.** Iconic pastries, dessert and bakery of Hatay cuisine

Q. 3 Which of the following below do you think are the iconic food of Hatay cuisine?			1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Categories	Foods								
Pastries	Kaytaz böreği	f	5	5	26	62	314	4.63	.759
		%	1.2	1.2	6.3	15.5	76.2		
	Kömbe	f	13	10	25	63	301	4.52	.947
		%	3.2	2.4	6.1	15.3	73.1		
	Antakya simidi	f	2.4	2.7	6.8	18.7	69.4	4.50	.916
		%	14	20	66	89	223		
Desserts	Külçe	f	13	15	49	72	263	4.35	1.032
		%	3.2	3.6	11.9	17.5	63.8		
	Kahke	f	13	20	42	78	259	4.33	1.048
		%	3.2	4.9	10.2	18.9	62.9		
	Peynirli künefe	f	3	2	14	31	362	4.81	.580
		%	.7	.5	3.4	7.5	87.9		
Breads	Kabak tatlısı	f	11	6	26	66	303	4.56	.884
		%	2.7	1.5	6.3	16.0	73.5		
	Müşebbek	f	12	10	38	75	277	4.44	.963
		%	2.9	2.4	9.2	18.2	67.2		
	Haytalı	f	9	14	43	76	270	4.41	.959
		%	2.2	3.4	10.4	18.4	65.5		
Breads	Taş kadayıf	f	21	15	50	82	244	4.24	1.122
		%	5.1	3.6	12.1	19.9	59.2		
	Biberli	f	6	5	21	56	324	4.66	.756
		%	1.5	1.2	5.1	13.6	78.6		
	Katıklı	f	8	5	26	58	315	4.61	.818
		%	1.9	1.2	6.3	14.1	76.5		
Breads	Tandır	f	13	8	32	54	305	4.52	.949
		%	3.2	1.9	7.8	13.1	74.0		
	Lavaş	f	15	23	52	90	232	4.21	1.093
		%	3.6	5.6	12.6	21.8	56.3		
	Sac	f	22	26	56	89	219	4.10	1.179
		%	5.3	6.3	13.6	21.6	53.2		

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither agree nor disagree 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

The arithmetic averages for the iconic pastries of Hatay cuisine; “Kaytaz is iconic pastry of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.63), “Kömbe is iconic pastry of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.52), “Antakya Simidi is iconic pastry of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.50), Külçe is iconic pastry of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.35), Kahke is iconic pastry of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.33).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic desserts of Hatay cuisine; “Peynirli Künefe is iconic dessert of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.80), “Kabak Tatlısı is iconic dessert of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.56), “Müşebbek (züngül/halka) is iconic dessert of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.44), “Haytalı is iconic dessert of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.41), “Taş Kadayıf is iconic dessert of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.24).

The arithmetic averages for the iconic breads of Hatay cuisine; “Biberli is iconic bread of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.66), “Katıklı is iconic bread of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.61), “Tandır is iconic bread of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.52), “Lavaş is iconic bread of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.21), “Sac is iconic bread of Hatay cuisine.” ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.10).

The highest percentage (11 dishes) among 55 iconic dishes which is obtained from 11 (appetizers, soups, salads, pilafs, vegetable dishes with olive oil, vegetable dishes with meat, meat dishes, offals dishes, pastries, dessert, bakery) categories are given in table 5.

**Table 5.** Top eleven iconic dishes of Hatay cuisine according to the public of Hatay province

	Statements	%100	n (412)
1.	The iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine is Humus.	90.3	372
2.	The iconic soup of Hatay cuisine is Sireysil.	72.5	299
3.	The iconic salad of Hatay cuisine is Zahter.	93.4	385
4.	The iconic pilaf of Hatay cuisine is Mercimekli Bulgur.	77.9	321
5.	The iconic vegetable dish with olive oil of Hatay cuisine is Libye.	75.5	311
6.	The iconic vegetable dish with meat of Hatay cuisine is Şıhlı Mahşi.	79.6	328
7.	The iconic meat dish of Hatay cuisine is Sini (tepsi) kebab.	94.2	388
8.	The iconic offal dish of Hatay cuisine is Hamis.	57.3	236
9.	The iconic pastry of Hatay cuisine is Kaytaz.	91.7	376
10.	The iconic dessert of Hatay cuisine is Peynirli Künefe.	95.4	393
11.	The iconic bread of Hatay cuisine is Biberli.	92.2	380

## Discussion and Conclusion

Hatay, the great metropolis of Antiquity, has matured with the interaction between Eastern and Western civilizations, with its cultural heritage that fits 13 civilizations in its 8,000-year history and leaves traces of each civilization (Budak, 2008). Hatay province has three monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). There are ethnic populations such as Turkish Sunni-Alevi, Arab-Sunni, Arab-Alevi, Arab Christian, Armenian, Syriac, Greek, Kurdish, Afghan and Circassian in Hatay. Majority of the population is Turk Sunnis and their mother language is Turkish. On the other hand Arab Alevi, Arab Sunni and Arab Christians mother language are Turkish and Arabic. That's why some foods have arabic names such as; sireysil, mütebbele, hamis, müşebbek, Lahme la Varka, kahke, şıhlı mualla, şıhlı mahşi, abugannuç, sürk cheese.

Research results of iconic appetizers of Hatay cuisine; Humus, Abugannuç, Cevizli Biber, İçli Köfte and Sürk Cheese. Iconic soups of Hatay cuisine; Sireysil, Mahluta, Lebeniye and Borani, Mütebbele. Iconic salads of Hatay cuisine; Zahter, Sürk, Zeytin, Sarmaıç and Zerzevat. Iconic pilafs of Hatay cuisine; Mercimekli bulgur, Firik, Meyhane, Nohutlu etli bulgur and Kepse. Iconic vegetable dishes with olive oil of Hatay cuisine; Libye, Sarma, Şıhlı Mualla, Dolma Mukalla. Iconic vegetable dishes with meat of Hatay cuisine; Şıhlı Mahşi, Dolma, Sarma, Borani and Eggplant dishes (such as; bastırma, oturtma, musakka). Iconic meat dishes of Hatay cuisine; “Sini (Tepsi) Kebab, Kâğıt (Lahme la Varka) Kebab, Oruk, Döner Kebab and Belen Tava. Iconic offals dishes of Hatay cuisine; Hamis, Ciğer kebabı, Mumbar, İşkembe and Kelle Paça. Iconic pastries of Hatay cuisine; Kaytaz, Kömbe, Antakya Simidi, Külçe and Kahke. Iconic desserts of Hatay cuisine; Peynirli Künefe, Kabak Tatlısı, Müşebbek (züngül/Halka), Haytalı and Taş Kadayıf. Iconic breads of Hatay cuisine; Biberli, Katıklı, Tandır, Lavaş and Sac.

It is difficult to deal with all the food items in Hatay cuisine one by one. The most important reason for this is the diversity of food categories and the existence of more than one type of each dish. Information on some iconic food is as follows:

Sireysil and Mütebbele are cold soups of Hatay Cuisine for centuries, originate from Syria. The main ingredients of sireysil, are bulgur and yoghurt. Similarly but with one difference mübbele' s main ingredients wrought wheat and yoghurt. The two soups are prepared with similar methods. Both are consumed quite a lot in summer.

Oruk/içli köfte, which has an important place in the culinary culture of Hatay province, is one of the foods with geographical indication registered. Oruk which is estimated to have entered the Hatay cuisine through the Egyptian

cuisine (Budak, 2008), has been developed by the people of Hatay over the centuries and brought into the culinary culture of dozens of derivatives. It is consumed as soup, hot starter and main course.

The main ingredients of hummus are chickpeas, tahini, lemon juice and garlic (Zaouali, 2007; Salloum, 2010). Today, hummus is widely used in the cuisine of many countries (Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Greece, America, etc.). Depending on the countries, it is sometimes consumed as a main course, sometimes as an appetizer and sometimes as a dip. The geographical indication registration application process is continues for hummus, which is the iconic appetizer of Hatay cuisine, This shows that hummus is much more than an appetizer in Hatay cuisine and is embraced by the local people.

Abugannuç was prepared by adding tahini, garlic and lemon juice to roasted eggplant in Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese cuisine during the Middle Ages (Zaouali, 2007). In Hatay cuisine, Abugannuç has turned into a dish prepared with vegetables grown in the region (eggplant, pepper, tomato), aromatic plants (garlic, parsley) and produced foods (pomegranate syrup, olive oil). Roasted eggplant, pepper and tomato for many years; It is made by adding garlic, parsley, pomegranate syrup, olive oil and salt. Although it is widely consumed in public cuisine, it is also included in the menus of local restaurants.

In his cookbook called *Kitâbü't-Tabîh*, Ibn Sayyar el-Varrak (10th century) included a recipe consisting of pomegranate syrup and green olives as main ingredients. According to Budak (2008), this recipe fits perfectly with Zeytin salad, which is considered one of the traditional salads of Hatay cuisine. Green olive salad, one of the unique dishes of Hatay cuisine; It is prepared with materials grown and produced in the region. In ancient times, the main ingredients of this salad were green olives, pomegranate syrup and olive oil (Tekin, 1993).

Antakya kâğıt kebab is one of the traditional meat dishes of Hatay cuisine and is one of the foods with a geographical indication. It is a kebab, also known as "lahme la varka" in Arabic in the region, consisting of a mixture of veal breast meat, green and red pepper (hot or sweet), parsley, garlic, salt and pepper, cooked on oiled paper in the form of a disk. It is one of the kebab varieties made by chopping with a line-like knife called "Zırh".

Sini (tepsi) kebab, prepared from large and large trays for crowded tables, is a special occasion dish in Hatay cuisine. It takes its place at the tables of condolences on painful days such as funerals, as well as on invitation tables. Sini kebab, which is put out and consumed together, expresses sharing and unity for the people (Tanriverdi, 2013).

When the iconic pilafs are examined, it is generally seen that pilafs made of bulgur. Such as mercimekli bulgur (green lentils, bulgur, caramelized onions and olive oil) Meyhane/Domatesli pilaf (tomato, pepper, onion, bulgur and olive oil). On the other hand Firik pilaf made of a very unique type of bulgur, obtained by various processes of a special wheat type known as Firik (green) Wheat, attracting attention with its unique aroma and taste, and especially Firik pilaf is among the most common dishes in Hatay cuisine.

Although there was no doner and doner kebab culture in Hatay in the 1960s and 1970s, it was formed over time by being influenced by fast food trends and turned into a product that is unique and called by its local name (Hatay döner), as in other dishes influenced by other cultures (Ejder, 2021). Döner, which is the most common fast food known in Hatay, has become one of the most consumed foods that has been adopted by the public in a short time, unlike hamburgers and similar fast foods.

Offal dishes represent a special category of food that has been consumed in different regions and communities for

many years. Initially used to overcome economic hardships and prevent waste, offal found a place in cuisines to create unique flavors and aromas. For example, offal dishes have a prominent place in Ottoman and Turkish culinary cultures and are considered elements that reflect historical and cultural heritage. Similarly, hamis, an offal dish, carries a heritage from the past as a dish of the multicultural community in Hatay cuisine. Therefore, it plays an important role, not only as a dish but also as a cultural symbol.

In the past, Hatay Kaytaz Böreği, which was specially prepared only for special days, has become a product that is produced every day. It is one of the traditional foods of Hatay cuisine. When traces of the origins of Kaytaz pastry are traced, it is seen that it takes place in the cuisines of countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Syria under the name Sfiha / sfeeha (Marks, 2010). Kaytaz pastry, which is one of the geographical indication registered foods, has a reputation connection with the geographical border.

Katıklı and Biberli bread, which is one of the important foods of Hatay cuisine. The main materials are grown and produced in the region; dried red pepper, pepper paste, sürk cheese, zahter, sesame and olive oil (İflazoğlu and Sarper, 2021). When prepared with Sürk cheese or spinach, “katıklı bread”; When it is prepared with dried red pepper, it is called “biberli bread”. The cooking processes are traditionally carried out in a tandoor or stone oven. Biberli /Katıklı breads, which have been made for more than a century and consumed at every meal of the day, have an important place in the local cuisine.

Peynirli Künefe is a dessert that dates back to the 18th century. Although different geographies are pointed out as its origin, Peynirli künefe has been owned by the people here due to its widespread production and consumption in the city for many years (Yavuz, 2021). Cooking, serving and eating peynirli künefe has become a ritual. Peynirli Künefe accompanies all areas of social life when considered culturally in Hatay cuisine.

The clues to the origin of Hatay Kömbe, which is widely consumed in Hatay cuisine and whose geographical indication is registered, point to Ancient Egyptian, Lebanese and Syrian cuisine (Robertson, 2017). While Hatay Kömbesi was once prepared only as a treat on special occasions (especially Ramadan Feast), nowadays it is among the treats prepared more commonly in the hospitality of guests, besides the feast. Although the ingredients of the Kömbe differ in Egyptian, Lebanese and Syrian cuisine, the most important common points are; the similarity of the wooden molds that give the shape of the kömbe and being a symbol of religious (especially Ramadan) holidays. In this context origins of these foods and their cultural values shows that the of iconic dishes in Hatay cuisine is a symbol of cultural identity.

Various researchers (such as, Çimen, et al., 2016; Oğuz, 2016; Güzel and Öncel, 2018; Şahin and Tosun, 2019; Kurtar, 2021, Çekiç , 2021) conducted studies on tourists about the memorable dishes of Hatay cuisine. According to the results, the memorable dishes are respectively Peynirli künefe, Oruk, Kâğıt kebab, Sini (tepsi) kebab, Katıklı bread, Biberli bread, Kabak dessert, Humus, Belen tava, Abugannuç, Zahter salad. In the current study, all of these foods mentioned among the findings. However, the results of the this study shows the potential of more dishes to come to the fore in Hatay cuisine. In this context origins of these foods and their cultural values shows that the of iconic dishes in Hatay cuisine is a symbol of cultural identity.

In conclusion along with the historical background, civilizations with different cultures and beliefs shape the present gastronomic identity of Hatay, and the local people have also managed to prioritize their own taste and local

products. An important part of the ancient foods that entered the cuisine of Hatay centuries ago through cultural interaction are still among the foods with gastronomic value. Consumption of produced agricultural and animal foods is also very common in Hatay cuisine. For this reason, it is possible to observe different dietary habits in Hatay, which has a versatile culinary culture. Rather than a single type of nutrition understanding; combinations of local foods (white/red meat dishes, dairy products, pastries, vegetables/fruits, edible plants and vegetable/animal oils) give Hatay cuisine a unique feature (Boz, 2021). Thanks to the availability of these opportunities, the people have diversified the existing foods and even developed new food recipes). For example; many varieties of hummus are prepared such as butter, olive oil, pastrami and wraps. There are more than 30 types of kebab besides a few known kebab dishes (kâğıt, sini, şiş ect.) in Hatay cuisine. About 10 types of kâğıt kebab are prepared with different products. In addition, there are over 20 red meat dishes, over 20 fish dishes, over 10 offal, over 30 types of oruk. Over 30 soups, over 50 appetizers, over 20 salads, over 40 vegetable dishes, over 25 dolma and sarma, nearly 40 bulgur and rice pilaf, nearly 50 pastries and bread, In addition to over 70 desserts, there are local cheeses, processed olives and pickles (Budak, 2008; Tanrıverdi, 2013). Also variety of meat dishes and the culture of butcher & bakery that emerged accordingly; it can be listed as the reflection of the tandoor, stone oven and sheet baking tools on the diversity of local bread and pastries.

### **Limitations and Themes for Further Research**

The current study presents a point of view about what is the iconic food of Hatay and also their cultural identity. Limiting factors of the application were that the research only covered Hatay cuisine, that it was carried out with the participation of individuals residing in Hatay province, and that the quantitative data collection process coincided with the dates of April 30 and May 15, 2023 in Hatay, which is among the 11 provinces affected by the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquake. But this is also the strength of the study that being particularly focusing on a contextual understanding of the icon foods in Hatay. Moreover this aspect of iconic foods is a current field in literature therefore, similar studies can be applied in different regions (for example in other UNESCO Gastronomy Cities). On the other hand, considering that gastronomy is a multidisciplinary field, the following research proposals have been developed:

The iconic foods of different destinations can be studied in the cultural and historical context of the region to be included in the study. Cultural studies can seek answers to questions such as how iconic foods have evolved, what traditional rituals they are associated with, and at what times society has attached importance to iconic foods. Qualitative and quantitative studies can guide destination development by measuring tourist expectations and satisfaction. On the other hand, studies can be conducted to examine the strategies used by destinations to promote and market iconic foods. Similarly, comparative analyses can be conducted to examine how different destinations promote and market iconic foods.

Universities and other stakeholders can develop training and awareness programs on food tourism and iconic foods. In this way, tourism professionals and local people can be made more aware of the issues involved. They could work on how to associate iconic foods with tourism products and how to present them to tourists. Studies can also be conducted on how to develop the production of iconic foods according to the principle of sustainability. In addition, studies can be conducted on how the production of iconic foods can be integrated with tourism to contribute more to the local economy.

The above suggestions provide a roadmap for further research to better understand the role of iconic foods in gastronomy. The proposed study topics will not only contribute to the development of gastronomic literature but will also have a positive impact on gastronomic tourism.

## Declaration

All authors of the article contribute equally to the article process. The authors have no conflict of interest to declare. The ethics committee permission document required for the collection of data used in this study was obtained from Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University Ethics Committee with the decision number E-11054618-302.08.01-171500 dated 15.03.2023.

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**Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission**

**Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 16.03.2023-171500**



**T.C.  
ANKARA HACI BAYRAM VELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
Etik Komisyonu**

Sayı : E-11054618-302.08.01-171500  
Konu : Bilimsel ve Eğitim Amaçlı

**LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE**

İlgi : 13.01.2023 tarih ve E.156682 sayılı yazı.

İlgi yazınız ile göndermiş olduğunuz, Enstitünüz Gastronomi ve Mutfak Sanatları Anabilim Dalı **Doktora öğrencisi Nurhayat İFLAZOĞLU, Doç.Dr. Mustafa AKSOY** danışmanlığında yürüttüğü **"Simge Yiyeceklerin Otantiklik ve Çok Kültürlülük Kapsamında İncelenmesi: Hatay Örneği"** adlı tez çalışması ile ilgili konu Komisyonumuzun 15.03.2023 tarih ve 03 sayılı toplantısında görüşülmüş olup,

Etik Komisyonunca onaylanan ilgilinin çalışmasının, yapılması planlanan yerlerden izin alınması koşuluyla yapılmasında etik açıdan bir sakınca bulunmadığına oybirliği ile karar verilmiş; karara ilişkin katılım listesi ve onaylanan çalışmalar ekte gönderilmiştir.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Araştırma Kod No:2023/68

**Prof. Dr. Ramazan ÇAĞLAYAN**  
**Komisyon Başkanı**

Ek:

- 1- Katılımcı Listesi
- 2- Onaylı Çalışma

**Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.**

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Ankara

Telefon: +90 (312) 231 73 60

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