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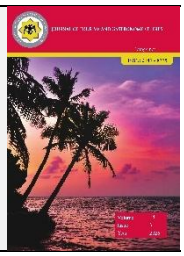

The Use of Local Ingredients in Michelin-starred Restaurants in Türkiye

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Abstract

This study examines how Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye integrate local ingredients into their menus, emphasizing their contributions to sustainability, cultural heritage, and gastronomic tourism. A qualitative content analysis of 198 dishes from 11 restaurants was conducted using publicly available menus to identify patterns in the use of local and geographically indicated (GI) products. Dishes were grouped by type to assess the depth of local sourcing and its alignment with modern culinary practices. Results revealed 98 distinct local ingredients, with GI-certified items such as pistachios, tarhana, and Malkara lentils being the most frequent. Tasting menus featured the highest incorporation of local products (50%), reflecting a deliberate narrative of locality and innovation. The findings highlight how fine dining establishments serve as cultural ambassadors, blending traditional and contemporary techniques while supporting regional sustainability and the economic vitality of local food systems.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a central paradigm across various industries, encompassing environmental, economic, and social dimensions (UNWTO, 2017; Sachs, 2015). As societies confront ecological degradation and climate change, sustainable practices are increasingly integrated into both production and service sectors. The tourism industry—particularly its food and beverage components—has emerged as a critical arena for implementing sustainability-oriented strategies (Hall & Gössling, 2016).

Within the culinary sector, sustainability is addressed through practices such as reducing food waste, sourcing seasonally, and promoting biodiversity (Belz & Peattie, 2014). One of the most widely acknowledged approaches involves the use of local and geographically indicated ingredients, which not only reduce environmental impacts by minimizing transport but also contribute to cultural preservation and local economic development (Sims, 2009; Feagan, 2007).

Michelin-starred restaurants, as globally recognized fine-dining institutions, play a distinctive role in this context. Often regarded as "ambassadors of place" (Fusté-Forné & Jamal, 2021), these establishments influence gastronomic trends by showcasing regional cuisines and innovatively reinterpreting traditional ingredients. In response to the growing importance of sustainability, the Michelin Guide introduced the "Green Star" in 2020 to distinguish restaurants committed to environmentally responsible practices (Michelin Guide, 2020).

Türkiye, with its deep-rooted culinary heritage and abundant regional diversity, holds significant potential for advancing sustainable gastronomy. The increasing visibility of Turkish Michelin-starred restaurants has renewed interest in how local ingredients are used to construct culinary identity, support regional economies, and contribute to sustainability discourse (Yavuz, 2021).

This study examines the integration of local ingredients in the menus of Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye. It explores how these ingredients are mobilized as symbolic markers of sustainability, gastronomic identity, and economic vitality within menu narratives, drawing upon qualitative content analysis of publicly available menu data. The study also investigates how such practices align with international discussions on sustainable luxury and cultural authenticity in fine dining.

Literature Review

Gastronomy constitutes a vital expression of cultural identity, embedding social values, historical narratives, and regional distinctiveness into the act of eating. In this context, local ingredients serve not only as culinary components but as symbols of place, memory, and authenticity (DeSoucey, 2010). Their integration into high-end dining contributes to what Bourdieu (1984) terms cultural capital, wherein the prestige of consuming the "authentic" elevates both the diner and the institution.

In the realm of luxury gastronomy, the concept of authenticity is frequently constructed through curated localism—menus that present regional ingredients as representations of tradition and identity. Yet, this authenticity is often performative and mediated, shaped by elite aesthetics and globalized standards of refinement (Appadurai, 1996; Baudrillard, 1994). In this system, luxury is not merely defined by rarity or cost, but by symbolic markers that signal taste, refinement, and cosmopolitanism, often through the selective inclusion of culturally charged ingredients.

Sustainability, another key discourse in contemporary gastronomy, refers not only to environmental practices but also to economic and cultural sustainability—supporting local producers, preserving culinary traditions, and reducing dependence on global supply chains (Feagan, 2007; Trubek, 2008). However, as Baudrillard (1994) warns, the representation of sustainability can easily become simulacral: a stylized image detached from the actual socio-ecological processes it purports to honor. In Michelin-starred contexts, where visual aesthetics and storytelling dominate, sustainability risks becoming a marketing device rather than a lived practice.

The role of restaurants as cultural agents within gastronomic tourism has been increasingly recognized in the literature (Fusté-Forné & Noguer-Juncà, 2023; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009). Restaurants act not only as commercial establishments but as ambassadors of place, conveying regional identity through menu design, sourcing strategies, and culinary narratives. Gastronomy tourism provides a vehicle for rural revitalization by transforming local food systems into marketable experiences (Castillo-Manzano, Castro-Nuño, López-Valpuesta & Zarzoso, 2020; Huang & Hall, 2023). However, as Cwiertka (2006) argues, this transformation often flattens complex food traditions into consumable and aestheticized forms—detached from their cultural and historical contexts.

Within the Michelin Guide system, the incorporation of local ingredients is often framed as a testament to culinary creativity and sustainability. Yet, this integration frequently occurs within a rigid evaluative structure that prioritizes technical mastery and Western plating aesthetics, marginalizing vernacular culinary knowledge (Johnston & Baumann, 2010; Wilk, 2006). As Zocchi and Fontefrancesco (2020) note, the demand for "authentic but innovative" dishes creates a paradox in which tradition must be reinvented to meet luxury standards. The result is what DeSoucey (2010) defines as gastronomic nationalism: the commodification of local identity for global consumption.

Empirical research in the Turkish context remains scarce. While Türkiye possesses a rich and diverse culinary heritage, academic studies on the role of local products in high-end gastronomy are limited. Yavuz (2021) emphasizes the need for deeper inquiry into how geographically indicated (GI) products are represented in fine dining, particularly given the increasing global interest in Turkish terroir. Similarly, several studies emphasize that local ingredients function not merely as raw materials but as powerful narrative devices that link cuisine to place, memory, and identity. For instance, Sims (2009) argues that local food acts as a “marker of authenticity” in gastronomic tourism, reinforcing regional character and heritage. Likewise, Tellström, Gustafsson, and Mossberg (2006) suggest that the use of local ingredients in restaurant settings contributes to place branding, connecting culinary practices with cultural narratives. Richards (2012) further underscores that food in tourism is increasingly valued not just for its taste, but for its symbolic role in conveying stories of origin, community, and continuity.

In sum, this study builds upon a growing body of literature that interrogates the symbolic and practical implications of local ingredient use in luxury gastronomy. It seeks to critically examine how menus serve as cultural texts, reflecting and shaping perceptions of authenticity, sustainability, and regional identity within the competitive and curated world of Michelin-starred dining.

Local Sourcing and Menu Design in Michelin-Starred Restaurants

Restaurants operate through two main components: the kitchen and the dining room staff. Menu design lies at the intersection of global and local influences. Global factors emphasize quality through elements like aesthetics, health, flavor, and sustainability, while local influences focus more on aspects such as short supply chains, regulatory

compliance, and cost efficiency (Fusté-Forné & Noguer-Juncà, 2024). Balancing these two approaches is essential for Michelin-starred restaurants to create sustainable gastronomic experiences. By using local products to ensure freshness and authenticity—sometimes even growing their own ingredients—these restaurants strengthen the connection between global standards and local uniqueness, ultimately contributing to gastronomic tourism (Čaušević & Fusté-Forné, 2022).

Michelin-starred restaurants attract tourists through high-quality standards (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2020) and play a key role in sustainability by using local ingredients for freshness and cultural preservation (Telfer & Wall, 2000). Locally sourced menus promote zero-waste practices, sustainable supply chains, and culinary diversity (Noguer-Juncà & Fusté-Forné, 2022). While chefs emphasize seasonal authenticity, sommeliers focus more on wine pairing than local products (Özdemir & Özdemir, 2023). Studies highlight their role in fostering creativity and promoting regional cuisines (Putri, Sulistyawati, Suark & Ariani, 2013; Vargas-Sánchez & López-Guzmán, 2020; Huang, Hall & Chen, 2024). Post-COVID-19 adaptations in management, product innovation, and marketing have strengthened the sector's sustainability (Gottardello & Karabag, 2022). Collaborations with local producers enhance regional visibility and sustainable gastronomic tourism (Fusté-Forné & Noguer-Juncà, 2023). Michelin-starred restaurants shape consumer behavior, prioritizing quality over quantity in attracting international tourists (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2020), while local ingredients boost guest satisfaction and menu creativity (Lin, Marine-Roig & Llonch-Molina, 2022; Vargas-Sánchez & López-Guzmán, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Michelin-starred restaurants adapted by innovating their offerings and prioritizing locality, freshness, and sustainability in sourcing ingredients (Gottardello & Karabag, 2022). These strategies underscore the value of local food in creating distinctive and sustainable menus, despite challenges in supply chain management and global influences. Studies also emphasize the importance of locality, seasonality, and tradition in menu creation, as seen in regions like Catalonia and San Sebastian (Çavuş & Nazik, 2022; Fusté-Forné & Noguer-Juncà, 2023). Local ingredients not only enrich dining experiences but also foster cultural heritage, meet consumer demand for authenticity, and position Michelin-starred restaurants as key players in promoting regional culinary traditions.

This study examines recent trends in Michelin-starred restaurant menus, focusing on the balance between local and imported products, ingredient categorization, and menu structuring. By evaluating the role of local products, it aims to explore their potential for enhancing the global recognition of regional culinary heritage, positioning Michelin-starred restaurants as leaders in sustainable gastronomy.

Food Heritage in Türkiye

This study focuses on Türkiye's rich culinary heritage, which plays a key role in global gastronomy (Cömert and Durlu Ozkaya, 2014). Michelin-starred restaurants contribute to its international recognition by integrating local ingredients with contemporary techniques, supporting local producers while enhancing dining experiences (Çavuş, Tiwari, Sthapit & Çiftçi, 2024). Türkiye possesses a rich culinary heritage shaped by its unique geography, historical crossroads position, and cultural diversity. As a meeting point of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, the country's food culture reflects both historical continuity and regional variety (Albala, 2011). From the imperial Ottoman cuisine to contemporary reinterpretations, traditional dishes are rooted in locally sourced ingredients and are enriched by diverse regional practices. Many elements of Turkish gastronomy are also recognized by UNESCO as part of the

country's Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2023).

Food heritage in Türkiye is not only a matter of culinary tradition but also a core component of cultural identity and place-based authenticity (Trubek, 2008). The use of local and geographically indicated (GI) products plays a key role in preserving regional food knowledge, supporting rural development, and reinforcing destination branding strategies (Barham, 2003; Gössling, Hall & Weaver, 2011). Products such as olive oil, tarhana, pastirma, apricots, and Antep pistachios are embedded in both home cooking and haute cuisine, serving as both cultural symbols and economic assets (Yurdakul, 2020). Strong collaborations between Michelin-starred restaurants and local agri-food suppliers not only ensure high-quality standards but also reinforce sustainability and regional identity within the gastronomic tourism ecosystem (Meneguel, Hernández Rojas & Mateos, 2022).

In recent years, Türkiye's culinary heritage has increasingly been integrated into destination marketing strategies. No longer confined to street food and home-cooked meals, traditional elements are now being represented through Michelin-starred restaurants, where heritage is reimagined through fine dining formats. These restaurants blend traditional techniques with modern culinary innovations, offering globally appealing interpretations of regional flavors (Fusté-Forné & Noguer-Juncà, 2023; Huang, Hall & Chen, 2024). However, the strategic and holistic incorporation of local food heritage into high-end menus remains limited, signaling a need for more intentional approaches in both preservation and global culinary positioning (Everett & Aitchison, 2008).

Local ingredients featured in these restaurants—such as tarhana, firik bulgur, and Malkara lentils—serve not only to enhance taste but also to tell cultural stories and connect diners with the region's agricultural and culinary memory (Feagan, 2007). As such, Türkiye's food heritage should not merely be viewed as a relic of the past but as a strategic resource for shaping sustainable gastronomic experiences and reinforcing destination identity in the global tourism market.

Methodology

This study aims to investigate how local ingredients are integrated into the menus of Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye and to explore the cultural and gastronomic meanings attributed to these practices. While there is growing global interest in the use of local ingredients in fine dining, existing literature predominantly focuses on Western European or North American contexts. In Türkiye, the Michelin Guide has only recently begun awarding stars, and there remains a notable lack of empirical and theoretical research on how local products are incorporated into the high-end dining experience within this emerging fine dining landscape. Thus, this study addresses a critical gap by examining the extent to which local and geographically indicated (GI) products are featured in the menus of Türkiye's Michelin-starred restaurants and what implications this carries for gastronomic identity, sustainability, and luxury representation. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: "How are local and geographically indicated ingredients integrated into the menus of Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye, and what cultural, economic, and gastronomic meanings are attached to their use?" To answer this question, the study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach, supported by a case study methodology (Yin, 2014), which enables the exploration of complex phenomena within their real-world contexts. The focus on Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye constitutes the bounded case, allowing for a contextualized understanding of luxury gastronomy in a national setting. At the time of data collection, the 2025 Michelin Guide Türkiye selection listed 14 starred restaurants (one two-star and thirteen one-star establishments) across Istanbul, Izmir, and Muğla. Publicly available menu data — both textual and visual

— were collected from 13 of these restaurants; however, due to data accessibility issues (i.e., menus not published or not publicly accessible online), the final analysis includes 11 menus. It should be noted that the Michelin Guide's Türkiye selection has continued to expand since data collection: the 2026 selection extended coverage to Cappadocia and increased the number of starred restaurants to 17 (two two-star and fifteen one-star establishments). The findings reported here therefore reflect a bounded snapshot of the 2025 selection and should not be read as representative of Türkiye's current, expanding Michelin-starred restaurant landscape.

A total of 198 dishes spanning main courses, appetizers, tasting menus, intermediate dishes, and desserts were examined. Content analysis, as articulated by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), Mayring (2000), and Neumann (2003), was employed to systematically identify recurring patterns, themes, and symbolic expressions related to the use of local ingredients. The analysis was guided by six key parameters derived from both theoretical and empirical sources (Fine, 1996; Barham, 2003; Rappoport, 2003; Feagan, 2007; Trubek, 2008; Bryman, 2016), including:

- Prevalence of local ingredients in dishes;
- Dominant menu categories where local products appear;
- Regional origin specification;
- Presence of geographically indicated (GI) products;
- Cooking techniques associated with local ingredients;
- Descriptive language emphasizing quality, authenticity, or provenance.

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach to examine how local ingredients are integrated into the menus of Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye. Content analysis is particularly effective for systematically identifying patterns, meanings, and thematic structures in textual and visual data (Mayring, 2000; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2013). This method is appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and the accessibility of public-facing menu data as a reflection of curated gastronomic identity and brand communication (Bowen, 2009).

While direct fieldwork such as interviews or observations could have enriched the findings, data limitations and access constraints necessitated reliance on secondary data. As noted above, of the 13 Michelin-starred restaurants identified in the 2025 Michelin Guide Türkiye selection, menus for two restaurants could not be accessed online at the time of data collection; the final dataset therefore comprises 11 restaurants, yielding 198 distinct dishes. These dishes are categorized as follows: main courses (32), warm appetizers (7), appetizers (14), tasting menu items (126), and desserts (19). As curated public representations of each restaurant’s offerings, these menus serve as valid and ethically accessible materials for understanding ingredient use, branding strategies, and cultural positioning in luxury gastronomy.

To evaluate how local ingredients are framed and emphasized, a three-dimensional coding framework was developed based on a comprehensive review of existing studies on gastronomy, menu design, and local food representation (Okumus, Kock, Scantlebury & Okumus, 2013; Fusté-Forné & Noguer-Juncà, 2023; Johnston & Baumann, 2014). The coding categories were as follows:

- Origin of the ingredient (local, national, international)
- Menu category (appetizer, main course, dessert, tasting menu)
- Culinary technique (traditional, modern, hybrid)

Additionally, descriptive language highlighting quality, authenticity, or origin was noted to capture how local identity is articulated through menu narratives (Fine, 1996; Feagan, 2007). Ingredient names were cross-referenced with the official Turkish Geographical Indication database to verify GI status and regional attribution.

The coding process followed a hybrid strategy combining both deductive and inductive approaches (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013). Initially, predefined codes were applied based on the literature. For example, the classification of "local" ingredients followed Feagan's (2007) and Sims' (2009) definitions related to geographic proximity and cultural embeddedness. However, during the analysis, new codes emerged inductively — such as hybrid cooking techniques (e.g., combining sous vide with traditional open fire methods) and poetic or metaphorical descriptors used in menu texts (e.g., "grandmother's garden," "village memory") — which were then incorporated into the coding scheme. This iterative and flexible process enabled the analysis to remain theoretically grounded while also responsive to context-specific data.

Following the analytical principles of Krippendorff (2013), the transparency and reproducibility of the coding process were prioritized. The final dataset was grouped under three overarching analytical themes: ingredient origin and GI status, culinary technique and preparation, narrative expression, and symbolic framing.

Through this structured analysis, the study seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of how Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye engage with sustainability, regional identity, and gastronomic storytelling through their ingredient choices and menu design. The methodology allows for a critical exploration of frequency, intensity, and thematic placement of local products, contributing to broader discussions on the intersection of luxury dining and cultural representation.

Results

In order to contextualize the use of local ingredients in Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye, the background characteristics of the establishments were examined. These include the year of establishment, culinary style, geographic region, menu typology, and Michelin Guide rating. This contextual information helps to better understand how each restaurant positions itself within the gastronomic field, especially in terms of heritage, innovation, and regional representation. Table 1 presents a comparative overview of the restaurants included in the study.

Table 1. Contextual characteristics of Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye based on the 2025 Michelin Guide Türkiye selection

Restaurant Code	Year Established	Culinary Style	Region	Menu Count / Categories	Distinction
R1	2019	Modern Anatolian	Istanbul	2 (Tasting, Set Menu)	
R2	2005	New Anatolian	Istanbul	2 (Tasting, À La Carte)	
R3	2018	Turkish–Middle Eastern	Istanbul	3 (Starter, Main, Dessert)	
R4	2014	Local / Modern	Istanbul	2 (Tasting, Main Course)	
R5	2022	Modern Anatolian	Istanbul	1 (Tasting)	

Table 1. Contextual characteristics of Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye based on the 2025 Michelin Guide Türkiye selection (cont.)

R6	2022	French–Asian Fusion	Istanbul	2 (Tasting, Shared Plates)	
R7	2024	Japanese	Istanbul	1 (Tasting)	
R8	2025	Modern	Istanbul	1 (Tasting)	
R9	2023	Mediterranean / Regional	Izmir – Urla	2 (Tasting, Meze)	
R10	2023	Regional	Izmir – Urla	1 (Tasting)	
R11	2023	Modern	Izmir – Urla	1 (Tasting)	

Overall Representation of Local Ingredients

A total of 198 dishes from 11 Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye were analyzed, revealing the use of 98 unique local ingredients. However, 82 of these ingredients appeared only once across all menus, suggesting a high degree of diversity but limited continuity in the integration of local products. This finding points to an exploratory use of local ingredients rather than a systematic incorporation. For instance, pistachio (n=8), frik bulgur (n=3), Malkara lentils (n=3), mantı (Turkish dumplings, n=3), sumac (n=3), and tarhana (fermented soup, n=3) were the most frequently used items (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequently recurring local ingredients across Michelin-starred restaurant menus in Türkiye

Product	**Frequency**
Pistachio	8
Frik Bulgur	3
Malkara Lentil	3
Mantı (Turkish Dumpling)	3
Sumac	3
Tarhana (Fermented Soup)	3
Bodrum Lemon	2
Çeşme Mastic Gum	2
Isot (Urfa Pepper)	2
Buckwheat Crackers	2
Ödemiş Potato	2
Pastrami	2
Pide (Turkish Flatbread)	2
Yogurt	2
Yufka (Thin Flatbread)	2

When compared with studies by Smith, Brown and Williams (2021) and Zhao & Li (2022), which found a 68-72% local sourcing rate in European and Asian Michelin-starred restaurants respectively, the present study suggests that Turkish restaurants feature local ingredients less intensively. The limited recurrence of individual local products may reflect challenges in sourcing consistency, seasonal availability, or culinary positioning.

Distribution by Menu Category

Tasting menus accounted for 50% of all local ingredient mentions, with desserts (26%) and main courses (19%) following. Starters and warm appetizers were underrepresented, indicating that chefs tend to prioritize local ingredient use in courses where culinary storytelling and creativity are more prominent. Thus, while tasting menus facilitate a stronger alignment with local sourcing goals, the imbalance across menu categories points to a need for a

more integrated strategy in fine dining practices. Rather than isolated highlights, local products could be woven throughout the menu experience to foster continuity and depth.

Table 3. Distribution of local ingredients by dish category in michelin restaurant menus

Dish Category	Total Number of Dishes	Frequency	Percentage of Dishes Containing Local Ingredients
Starters	14	3	%43
Warm Appetizers	7	-	-
Main Courses	32	6	%19
Desserts	19	5	%26
Tasting Menus	126	62	%50

As detailed in Table 3, tasting menus dominate Michelin-starred restaurant offerings, with 62 instances recorded. This prevalence reflects their adaptability to frequent updates, the use of seasonal ingredients, and their ability to provide diverse culinary experiences that extend beyond standard dining.

Main courses represent the second-highest category for local ingredient use, with 6 instances. This may be attributed to the flexibility of incorporating diverse accompaniments and garnishes. However, the underutilization of local ingredients in desserts, starters, and particularly warm appetizers signals opportunities for greater integration of regional products

Role of Geographically Indicated (GI) Products

Among the 98 identified ingredients, 37 had Geographic Indication (GI) status. The Aegean (n=17) and Marmara (n=5) regions were the most frequently represented, which corresponds to the geographic concentration of Michelin-starred restaurants in these areas. Products such as Uşak tarhana and Balıkesir milk lamb are prominently featured, reflecting a regional emphasis in sourcing.

However, several GI products such as tarhana and pide have multiple registrations across different provinces, making it difficult to determine precise local origin. This ambiguity complicates efforts to trace the culinary geography of fine dining menus. Moreover, the low representation from Eastern and Central Anatolia highlights ongoing spatial inequalities in how regional products are valorized.

Table 4. Regional distribution and certification status of local products

Province	Region	Product	Geographical Indication (GI)
Afyon	Aegean	Dairy cheeses, Sour Cherry	PGI (Protected Geographical Indication)
Bodrum	Aegean	Keşkek, Fava Beans, Lemon	-
Bozdağ (Izmir)	Aegean	Potatoes	-
Çeşme	Aegean	Gum Mastic, Island Octopus	-
Datça	Aegean	Datça Almonds	PDO (Protected Designation of Origin)
Ege (General)	Aegean	Herbal Mayonnaise	-
Foça	Aegean	Salted Foça Yogurt	PDO
Ödemiş	Aegean	Ödemiş Potatoes	PDO
Salihli	Aegean	Almond Spread	PDO
Selçuk	Aegean	Selçuk Peach	-
Urla	Aegean	Blue Shrimp, Urla Artichoke	-
Uşak	Aegean	Uşak Tarhana	PDO
Balıkesir	Marmara	Balıkesir Milk Lamb	PDO

Table 4. Regional distribution and certification status of local products (cont.)

Bursa (Gürsu)	Marmara	Deveci Pear	PDO
Çanakkale	Marmara	Çanakkale Octopus	-
Malkara	Marmara	Malkara Lentils	PDO
Trakya	Marmara	Trakya Cheese	PDO[1]
Yedikule	Marmara	Yedikule Lettuce	-
Artvin	Black Sea	Macahel Honey	PGI
Bolu	Black Sea	Chestnut Honey	-
Trabzon	Black Sea	Trabzon Butter, Anchovy	PDO
Gaziantep	Southeast	Antep Pistachio Desserts	-
Harran (Urfa)	Southeast	Fermented Cumin Extract	-
Bitlis	East Anatolia	Hizan Honey	-
Kars	East Anatolia	Kars Gruyere Cheese	a[2]
Hatay	Mediterranean	Olive (Halhali), Hatay Spices	-
İskenderun	Mediterranean	İskenderun Shrimp	-
Karaman	Central Anatolia	Divle Cave Cheese	PDO
Türkiye (General)	General	Turkish Coffee, General Dairy	b[3]

[1] Four different cheeses from the Thrace subregion of the Marmara Region have been registered under the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) scheme: Edirne Ezine Cheese, Kırklareli White Cheese, Kırklareli Aged Kashar Cheese, and Malkara Aged Kashar Cheese.

[a2] Application for Geographical Indication (GI) registration has been submitted.

[b3] Application for registration as a Traditional Product has been submitted.

As shown in Table 4, Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye prominently feature 17 local products from the Aegean region, followed by 5 from Marmara, 4 from the Black Sea, and 3 each from Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean. Eastern and Central Anatolia are represented with 2 products each, along with 2 items classified as "general" local products. However, some menu items lack explicit regional attribution, complicating efforts to determine their origins. For instance, GI-certified items like pide, tarhana, and olive oil are registered in multiple locations across Türkiye, making precise regional classification challenging.

Culinary Techniques and Presentation

The menus analyzed displayed a wide variety of culinary techniques, with 79 individual technique mentions across all dishes. These included traditional methods (e.g., tandoor, ember roasting) and modernist approaches (e.g., sous vide, emulsification, foams). The most frequently used were sorbet (n=12), ice cream (n=10), and grilling (n=8).

[1] Marmara Region includes four cheeses from Trakya Region registered with PDO: Edirne Ezine Cheese, Kırklareli White Cheese, Kırklareli Aged Cheese (Eski Kaşar), Malkara Aged Cheese (Eski Kaşar).
[2] Application for Geographical Indication (GI) has been submitted.
[3] Application for "Traditional Product" registration has been submitted.

Table 5. Techniques used in menus

Technique Category	Technique Type	Associated Ingredients	Usage Frequency
Preparation Techniques	**Sorbet**	Quince, mandarin, pear, green apple, passion fruit & mango, orange & lavender, blackberry sherbet, apple	12
	Ice Cream	Milk pudding, sushi rice, lavender, white truffle & vanilla, coconut, baklava, pistachio, burnt honey, saffron yogurt	10
	Oil	Shallot, green onion, green lemon, pine cone, arugula	5
	Foam	Bisque, mint, mushroom	3
	Cream	Pumpkin, pistachio, pilaki	3
	Glaze	Pumpkin, eggplant	2
	Tuile	Sesame	2
	Curing	Fish	1
	Pickling	Tahini, garlic	1
	Dehydration	Mushroom	1
	Oil Foam	Celery	1
Cooking Methods	**Grilling (Charcoal, Wood Fire, etc.)**	Carrot, green apple, celery, red pepper, pumpkin, eggplant, hindiba, tomatoes	8
	Roasting	Lamb, carrot, Çanakkale octopus	3
	Smoking	Oil, eggplant, salmon	3
	Oven-baked	Garlic, Deveci pear	2
	Cooked Over Open Fire	Trotter, tail	2
	Stone Cooked	Lamb tripe, spinach	2
	Coal	Curly lamb	1
	Poached	Egg	1
	Sous Vide	Chicken breast	1
	Tandoor	Duck	1
	Slow Cooked	Lamb	1
Plating Techniques	**Caramelization**	Peach sauce, nut, fig, onion, pear	4
	Jelly	Pomegranate, quince, fig	3
	Emulsification	Butter, oil, olive oil	2
	Fermentation	Tomato juice, potato bread	2
Processing Techniques	**Whipping**	Butter coffee	1
	Curing	Sea bass	1

Table 5 highlights the extensive use of diverse culinary techniques in Michelin-starred restaurant menus, showcasing a blend of tradition and innovation. Creative elements like sorrel sorbet, baklava ice cream, pine cone oil, and isot oil reflect this fusion, while molecular gastronomy methods such as oil infusion, foaming, and curing are used alongside traditional Turkish techniques like ember roasting, wood fire cooking, and tandoor preparation. Additionally, modern methods including sous vide and emulsification further expand the innovation landscape. The most frequently used techniques include sorbet preparation (n = 12), ice cream (n = 10), and grilling (n = 8), reflecting a preference for both textural innovation and traditional cooking forms. While techniques such as caramelization, roasting, and smoking remain essential components of regional culinary identity, the inclusion of emulsification, sous vide, and oil foams indicates a shift towards contemporary gastronomy.

Discussion and Conclusions

The evolving food culture has increased demand for meaningful and sustainable dining experiences. Michelin-starred restaurants have transitioned from symbols of prestige to self-positioned cultural ambassadors, discursively promoting sustainability and regional gastronomy through their menu narratives. This study explores the integration of local ingredients in Turkish Michelin-starred menus, highlighting their role in sustainability, cultural heritage, and gastronomic tourism. By blending traditional flavors with innovative techniques, these restaurants enhance Türkiye's

culinary identity and construct a narrative association with local producers and sustainable agriculture — an association that, based on the scope of this study, remains discursive rather than empirically verified.

The patterns identified in this study invite a critical reading through Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital and Baudrillard's (1994) theory of simulacra. Bourdieu's framework suggests that the inclusion of ingredients such as tarhana, Malkara lentils, or Antep pistachios in Michelin-starred menus does not merely reflect culinary choice, but functions as a form of symbolic capital: consuming the "authentically local" within a luxury setting confers distinction on both the diner and the establishment. The concentration of GI-certified products in the Aegean and Marmara regions — areas already associated with established tourism infrastructure and reputational capital — is consistent with this reading, suggesting that local ingredient use in this context operates less as an egalitarian celebration of Turkish food heritage than as a selective curation of prestige-bearing regional markers. This pattern is consistent with Manzano, Nuno, Valpuesta and Zarzoso's (2019) and DeSoucey's (2010) broader observation that geographical indication systems tend to favor regions with established reputations or infrastructural advantages, reinforcing rather than counteracting gastronomic centralization; the present findings suggest that Türkiye's fine-dining scene mirrors this structural imbalance.

At the same time, Baudrillard's (1994) notion of simulacra offers a useful lens for interpreting the symbolic gap observed between the frequency of local ingredient mentions and their operational depth. The finding that 82 of the 98 identified local ingredients appeared only once across all menus indicates that locality is often invoked rather than structurally embedded — a single-appearance pistachio or sumac garnish can signal "local sourcing" to the diner without representing a sustained sourcing relationship. This risk of symbolic detachment extends to technique as well as ingredient: the pairing of GI-certified products with modernist methods such as sous vide, emulsification, or foams — as in dishes combining traditional tandoor or ember-roasting with molecular gastronomy — may appear innovative, but their symbolic function must be interpreted with caution. As Baudrillard (1994) suggests, such gestures risk becoming simulacra: symbolic references detached from the lived cultural meaning they invoke. Rather than assuming that innovation automatically deepens authenticity, future studies should investigate how chefs themselves conceptualize these combinations — for instance, whether a dish such as baklava ice cream functions as an act of creative homage or primarily as a branding device.

The patterns identified above can be usefully situated against comparative findings from other Michelin-starred contexts. The recurrence rate observed in this study is notably lower than the 68–72% local-sourcing rates reported for European and Asian Michelin-starred restaurants by Smith, Brown and Williams (2021) and Zhao and Li (2022), suggesting that Turkish restaurants integrate local ingredients less intensively — or at least less consistently — than their counterparts elsewhere. This is consistent with Nguyen and Tran's (2022) observation that local ingredients often communicate regional identity symbolically while remaining constrained by standardization and supply issues; the symbolic presence of ingredients like tarhana and sumac in the present dataset reflects a similar desire for cultural representation, while their infrequent recurrence suggests a comparable gap between identity signaling and operational practice. It would therefore be premature to argue that the presence of local items on Turkish Michelin-starred menus directly equates to cultural preservation or sustainability.

The concentration of local ingredient use in tasting menus also aligns with Martinez, Smith, Johnson and Davis's (2023) finding that tasting menus offer North American chefs a flexible, minimalist format for showcasing seasonal

and regional diversity through a deliberately limited number of high-quality dishes. At the same time, Abbate, Cesaroni and Presenza (2019) note that starters and opening courses are critical for establishing the narrative tone of a dining experience; their comparatively marginal use of local ingredients in the present dataset therefore represents a missed opportunity for narrative cohesion — a pattern also echoed in Nguyen and Tran's (2022) analysis of Southeast Asian restaurants, where local and regional sourcing was similarly prioritized over international options in signaling culinary strategy. More broadly, sustainability concerns, local economic support, and authenticity are widely cited as drivers of increased local ingredient use in global fine dining (Smith, Williams & Brown, 2021; Zhao & Li, 2022); similar geographic clustering of local/GI sourcing around a small number of metropolitan centers has also been reported in other emerging fine-dining markets such as San Francisco and Shanghai (Haute Living San Francisco, 2024; Michelin Guide Shanghai, 2024), suggesting that the concentration observed here is not a uniquely Turkish phenomenon but a broader structural tendency of GI-oriented fine dining (Meneguel, 2017).

The hybrid use of traditional and modernist culinary techniques observed in this study — combining tandoor, wood-fired cooking, and ember roasting with sous vide, emulsification, and molecular gastronomy in dishes such as pine cone oil, isot oil, baklava ice cream, and frik bulgur risotto — resonates with De Albuquerque Meneguel, Mundet and Aulet's (2019b) description of a "fusion of tradition and innovation" in high-end gastronomy, and with Akoglu, Çavuş and Bayhan's (2017) findings on Turkish Michelin chefs' engagement with molecular gastronomy as a means of modernizing traditional recipes while preserving cultural authenticity. A comparable dynamic is visible in Svanberg's (2023) account of fermented mutton preservation in the Faroe Islands, where a local food practice rooted in human–microbiota–animal relationships has evolved into an exclusive culinary experience that reinforces regional identity — illustrating, as in the Turkish case, how local food heritage can be elevated into a marker of distinction within elite gastronomic contexts. Huang and Hall (2023) similarly argue that integrating local ingredients into fine dining can enhance cultural appreciation and, potentially, local economies; the present data, however, speak only to menu representation and cannot confirm measured economic effects. In the same vein, Çavuş, Şengül and Özkaya (2018) argue that modernizing traditional products through innovative gastronomy strengthens the global competitiveness of local cuisines — a claim that, within the scope of this study, is best understood as describing the cultural framing of sustainability rather than evidence of its economic or environmental realization.

Distinguishing between these two tendencies — rooted, continuous local sourcing versus symbolic or narrative use — is not a question that menu-text analysis alone can resolve; clarifying this distinction would require in-depth interviews with chefs and with the other stakeholders who bring these menus to diners. Indeed, menu-based evaluations of this kind are inherently limited in conveying chefs' own perspectives, priorities, and culinary philosophies regarding local ingredient use. Nonetheless, the imbalance between ingredient diversity (98 distinct products) and ingredient recurrence (only 16 products appearing in more than two menus) warrants caution toward claims that directly equate local ingredient use with heritage preservation or sustainability.

Determining whether the way these ingredients find their place on the menu — and whether they will continue to do so in future menu cycles — reflects a cost/sourcing decision, an effort to promote and protect regional products, or a more durable commitment to sustainable culinary heritage, will require longitudinal and comparative research. These theoretical readings gain further weight when situated within the specific structure of Türkiye's Michelin scene. As Table 1 shows, seven of the eleven restaurants in this study received their star after 2022, and none predates 2005.

Unlike the long-established Michelin cultures of France or Italy, the Turkish case is a genuinely emerging field — one where sourcing relationships, supplier networks, and menu identities are still being formed rather than inherited. This recency helps explain the low recurrence of individual ingredients across menus: it may reflect not a lack of commitment to locality, but the fact that many of these kitchens simply have not yet had time to build the kind of durable, repeatable supply relationships that produce consistent ingredient use.

A second contextual point concerns geography. Eight of the eleven restaurants examined are based in Istanbul, with the remainder clustered in Izmir–Urla. This concentration means that much of the "local" narrative constructed in these menus is, in practice, produced from a single metropolitan center reaching outward — Aegean artichokes, Marmara lentils, and Black Sea honey are not local to the kitchens serving them, but are curated and imported into an Istanbul-based tasting menu to signal regional breadth. This is not a criticism of the restaurants themselves, but it complicates any straightforward reading of "local sourcing": what is being performed is less a rooted, single-terroir cuisine than a curated map of Turkish regional identity, assembled at a distance from most of its own source regions.

This geographic pattern is compounded by the ambiguity of the GI system itself. As noted in Section 4.3, products such as tarhana, pide, and olive oil carry GI registrations in multiple provinces simultaneously, which means that a menu's claim to "local" or "regional" identity cannot always be traced to a single, verifiable source. When a dish lists "tarhana" without further specification, it is impossible to determine — from the menu alone — whether this refers to a supply relationship with a particular producer or simply invokes a nationally recognized culinary term. This ambiguity is not incidental; it is structurally built into how GI products are labeled in Türkiye, and it should temper any reading of GI presence as straightforward evidence of regional sourcing.

A related tension emerges around menu self-description. Several restaurants in this study brand themselves as "Modern Anatolian" or "New Anatolian" cuisine (Table 1), labels that imply a sustained, structural engagement with regional ingredients. Yet this branding is not always matched by ingredient-level depth: the same restaurants show the same pattern of high ingredient diversity but low recurrence observed across the dataset as a whole. When the kitchen's self-positioning is considered alongside the operational realities of its sourcing process, it reopens the question of whether locality here is being used structurally or discursively. Determining the extent to which the "Anatolian" label reflects a genuine commitment to locality therefore requires further investigation from multiple angles.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that generic recommendations to "increase local sourcing" are of limited use in the Turkish context. What this study's findings point to instead are context-specific interventions: clarifying GI registration at the point of menu labeling (e.g., specifying the province of origin for multi-registered products such as tarhana or pide) to allow diners and researchers alike to trace provenance; and actively incorporating producers from underrepresented regions — particularly Eastern and Central Anatolia, which together account for only four of the 98 identified ingredients — into Istanbul- and Izmir-based supply networks, rather than leaving regional representation concentrated in the Aegean and Marmara. Given that the Turkish Michelin scene is still forming, these are precisely the kinds of structural choices — made now, while sourcing networks are new — that will determine whether local ingredient use in Turkish fine dining matures into a genuinely distributed culinary practice or remains concentrated around a small set of already-privileged regions and producers.

In light of this theoretical reading, the findings of this study point not only to how often local ingredients appear

on the menu, but to the function they serve and the audience they are performed for. The key findings summarized below are therefore presented with this distinction in mind — between symbolic/discursive positioning and verifiable, operational practice.

Taken together, these findings resist a simple, celebratory reading of local ingredient use in Turkish Michelin-starred dining. What emerges instead is a picture of selective and uneven localism: local and GI-certified products function in menu narratives primarily as markers of distinction rather than as verified indicators of producer support or environmental practice, and this symbolic positioning is not evenly distributed across Türkiye's culinary geography. The concentration of GI-certified ingredients in the Aegean (n=17) and Marmara (n=5) regions, against the near-absence of Central and Eastern Anatolian products (two items each), suggests that the "local" invoked on these menus is, in practice, a narrow and already-privileged slice of Turkish food heritage — one that tracks existing tourism infrastructure and reputational capital rather than the full breadth of the country's regional cuisines.

This unevenness is compounded by the operational realities documented above: a Michelin scene that is barely four years old for most of the restaurants studied, a supply geography funneled largely through Istanbul, and a GI registration system whose multi-province ambiguity makes it difficult to verify where a "local" ingredient actually comes from. Under these conditions, sustainability and heritage preservation are best understood as claims narrated through menu language rather than outcomes verified by this study's data; whether they translate into measurable reductions in environmental impact, into income for producers in underrepresented regions, or into durable supply relationships lies beyond what menu content analysis can establish, and would require direct engagement with producers, supply chains, and diners themselves.

Read this way, the practical significance of this study's findings is less about confirming that Turkish fine dining is "sustainable" and more about identifying where the gap between narrative and practice is widest — and therefore where intervention would matter most. Two such gaps stand out. The first is regional: if Michelin-starred kitchens are to move beyond a curated map of Aegean and Marmara prestige products, deliberate effort is needed to build supply relationships with producers in Central and Eastern Anatolia, regions whose culinary heritage is well documented (Section 2.2) but almost entirely absent from this dataset. The second is informational: the multi-province ambiguity surrounding GI products such as tarhana and pide could be addressed through more precise menu labeling — specifying province of origin at the point of sale — which would allow both diners and future researchers to distinguish a genuine sourcing relationship from a symbolic gesture. Because the Turkish Michelin scene is still forming, these are choices that can still shape the sector's trajectory, rather than corrections to an already-entrenched practice.

Expanding the Michelin Guide's evaluation criteria to include verifiable sustainability metrics — such as documented local sourcing volume or supply-chain traceability, rather than menu-level representation alone — could enhance accountability. Comparative studies on regional ingredient usage would provide further insights for aspiring Michelin-starred restaurants across Asia, Europe, and the Americas, helping to reveal whether the discursive pattern identified here (diversity without depth) is distinctive to the Turkish context or reflects a broader condition of fine-dining sustainability communication. Michelin-starred restaurants appear to play a strategically significant role in the discourse of sustainable gastronomy, integrating local ingredients with innovation in ways that narratively align with economic growth and cultural heritage. Future research — particularly involving producers, supply chains, and

consumer perception — is needed to determine whether this discursive alignment translates into measurable impact on global gastronomy.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the evolving theoretical discourse on sustainable gastronomy by reinforcing the role of Michelin-starred restaurants as key actors in the localization of global culinary standards. Building on the conceptualization of restaurants as "ambassadors of place," the findings offer empirical support to existing theories that link the use of local ingredients with authenticity, cultural preservation, and gastronomic tourism. The observed integration of geographically indicated (GI) products such as Antep pistachios, tarhana, and Malkara lentils provides a tangible manifestation of how fine dining can serve as a medium for regional identity construction and transmission.

Furthermore, the study enriches the theoretical framework by evidencing how high-end culinary establishments balance tradition with innovation—utilizing both heritage cooking methods (e.g., tandoor, ember roasting) and modernist techniques (e.g., sous vide, molecular gastronomy). This fusion supports a more nuanced understanding of gastronomic creativity, sustainability, and luxury as interconnected constructs. The results also expand the theoretical perspective on menu design as a cultural artifact, reflecting locality, seasonality, and sustainability, thereby inviting further interdisciplinary inquiry into the semiotics and strategic positioning of fine-dining menus in the global tourism and food systems. This brings us to a question future research should take seriously: is the use of local ingredients in Türkiye's Michelin-starred kitchens a genuine culinary commitment to regional food systems, or is it, at least in part, a way of presenting the menu — a means of signaling authenticity and sustainability to diners without a corresponding depth in sourcing practice? The present data cannot settle this question on its own, but the fact that most local ingredients appear only once, while only a handful recur across menus, suggests that locality is often used as a narrative element on the plate rather than a consistent sourcing strategy in the kitchen.

Practical Implications

The findings offer several actionable insights for culinary professionals, hospitality managers, and gastronomy tourism stakeholders. For chefs, the study emphasizes the potential of integrating local ingredients into tasting menus—not only to comply with sustainability goals but also to enhance narrative-driven dining experiences. Practices such as featuring seasonal GI-certified products and revisiting traditional dishes with contemporary techniques can elevate menu innovation while preserving culinary heritage. From a management perspective, this research suggests that building strong, direct relationships with local producers is essential for ensuring ingredient quality, traceability, and supply chain resilience. These collaborations can help luxury restaurants align with global sustainability benchmarks such as the Michelin Green Star criteria, thereby enhancing brand differentiation and consumer trust.

Tourism and policy professionals can leverage these insights to design gastronomic routes and marketing strategies that promote local food systems and regional identity. Encouraging restaurants to clearly label the provenance of ingredients and increasing visibility of underrepresented regional products can foster deeper connections between cuisine, culture, and place. Ultimately, Michelin-starred restaurants have the potential to be both trendsetters and custodians of culinary sustainability, offering replicable models for integrating locality into high-end dining. This study highlights the strategic — and largely discursive — role of Michelin-starred restaurants

in integrating local ingredients into fine dining, a role that narratively supports sustainability, cultural heritage, and gastronomic tourism claims without constituting empirical proof of these outcomes. By analyzing geographically indicated (GI) products such as Antep pistachios, tarhana, and Malkara lentils, the research underscores the importance of local sourcing in shaping regional culinary identities.

Culinary applications of this research include the creation of tasting menus that highlight seasonal local products, such as lamb dishes infused with Bodrum lemon or desserts featuring Çeşme mastic gum. The study also emphasizes the refinement of traditional techniques like tandoor and grilling, integrated with modern approaches such as molecular gastronomy and sous vide, to enhance texture and flavor while preserving authenticity. Moreover, Michelin-starred restaurants can leverage these findings to design innovative dishes that celebrate local ingredients, such as fermented tarhana consommé, slow-cooked Kars gruyère-infused risotto, or reimagined Turkish dumplings using contemporary plating techniques. It is important to note that the Michelin Guide's core starred evaluation — based on product quality, mastery of technique, the chef's personality, value for money, and consistency (Michelin Guide, n.d.) — is deliberately food-focused and does not itself incorporate sustainability metrics; environmentally responsible practice is instead recognized separately through the Green Star, introduced in 2020 (Michelin Guide, 2020), which the 2025 Türkiye selection already reports separately alongside starred restaurants. Rather than proposing that local sourcing be folded into the starred criteria themselves — which would blur a distinction the Guide maintains deliberately — the more relevant implication of this study concerns the Green Star track specifically: incorporating documented, verifiable indicators such as local sourcing volume, supplier traceability, or waste-reduction data into Green Star assessment could help ensure that this recognition reflects operational practice rather than menu-level narrative alone. Given that the present study cannot itself verify such practice from menu text, this remains a direction for future research and Guide methodology to pursue jointly, rather than a prescriptive recommendation to the Guide.

Limitations and Future Studies

One of the main limitations of this study is its reliance on publicly available menu data from Michelin-starred restaurants in Türkiye. While this approach provides valuable insights into ingredient usage and menu design, it does not account for chefs' decision-making processes or the challenges they face in sourcing local ingredients. Future studies could benefit from in-depth interviews with chefs and restaurant managers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on sustainability, locality, and innovation in fine dining.

Additionally, the study focuses on a specific geographic region, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other culinary landscapes. Comparative research examining Michelin-starred restaurants in different cultural and economic contexts would provide a broader understanding of global trends in sustainable gastronomy. Another limitation is the exclusion of consumer perception and dining experiences, which are crucial in evaluating the impact of local ingredient integration. Future research could incorporate surveys or experimental studies to analyze how diners perceive and value locally sourced ingredients in Michelin-starred establishments. Additionally, because the Michelin Guide's Türkiye selection is expanding rapidly — from 14 starred restaurants in 2025 to 17 in 2026, with new coverage in Cappadocia — the sample analyzed here reflects a specific and time-bound moment in an evolving fine-dining landscape. Future research should revisit this analysis as the selection stabilizes and expands to additional regions.

It is also important to explicitly acknowledge the epistemic limits of the data source itself. As this study relies exclusively on publicly available menu texts, its findings describe how local ingredients are represented in restaurant marketing and menu communication — not how they are actually sourced, procured, or paid for. Menu texts do not constitute economic data: they cannot verify producer income, contract terms, or fair-trade practices, nor can they substitute for life-cycle assessment data needed to evaluate environmental impact. Accordingly, this study does not claim to measure the economic or environmental contribution of local ingredient use in Turkish Michelin-starred restaurants; it claims only to document how such contributions are narrated. Any inference beyond this — regarding actual producer welfare, supply-chain sustainability, or carbon impact — would require direct engagement with producers, suppliers, and restaurant procurement records, which lies beyond the scope of menu content analysis.

Finally, this study primarily assesses ingredient usage patterns without measuring their direct economic and environmental impacts. Future studies could employ quantitative methods to evaluate the sustainability metrics of local sourcing, such as carbon footprint reduction and economic contributions to regional producers. Expanding the scope of research in these areas would strengthen the understanding of sustainable practices in high-end gastronomy and their role in shaping the future of fine dining.

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