

A Study on the Change of Menu Lists with the Effect of Pandemic in the Gastronomy Sector: Istanbul Province Fine-Dining Restaurant Examples

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is one of the most influential events of today, has a great impact on the gastronomy sector as well as making its impact felt in many sectors. Despite the current pandemic conditions, human being as a social being needs to eat out for physiological, psychological, economic and social reasons. In order to meet this need, individuals of all ages and demographics who are active, retired, not working, family with children or living alone, especially on weekends, become customers of eating and drinking places suitable for their budget. At this point, chefs of eating and drinking places, which is described as fine-dining in Istanbul, which has many alternative restaurants, feel the need to include healthier and immune-boosting foods and beverages on their menu lists. Fine-dining restaurants are a type of restaurant where the ambiance of the place is extremely important, where there are creative, world cuisine-influenced, mostly small portions of tasting menus, mostly made using seasonal and local products. Fine-dining restaurants in Istanbul comprise the main subject of the study. In this study, pre-pandemic and post-pandemic menus of fine-dining restaurants in Istanbul were examined to reveal the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Turkish gastronomy sector. In addition, the effects of the pandemic on the food and beverage sector and the changes made in the menu lists were determined. The content of the study is based on the semi-structured interview technique. The obtained data were evaluated with content analysis and the findings were interpreted.

Keywords: COVID-19, Fine-Dining, Food and Beverage Services, Gastronomy, Menu.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 virus, which is influential on the lives of many people globally, has had a negative impact on many sectors in the world and in Turkey. The inability to make national and international travels, flight cancellations, continuing education online, quarantine practices and the implementation of lockdowns by governments have deeply affected all sectors. The implementation of lockdowns has also had a negative impact on the psychology of people. As the food and beverage industry is closely related to eating outside, drinking coffee-tea or something else outside, these situations above has caused businesses to be closed for a long time (Okat et al., 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) first current complaints was a new type of coronavirus

(2019-nCoV), and on February 11, 2020, this new virus was named SARS-CoV-2. The epidemic, which is called the "COVID-19" pandemic in short, spread to many countries in a short time, especially the Asian region countries, after China, and reached an international dimension that affected the whole world. It was perceived as a threat because it had an impact in many countries and continents in the world and its rate of spread was very high, and it was described as a "pandemic" with its general name. Due to its ability to easily spread from person to person, urgent measures have been taken (İflazoğlu & Aksoy, 2020).

According to the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO), three criteria are sought in general terms for a disease to be a pandemic. It should be a new virus or a mutated factor, be easily transmitted to humans, and be easily and continuously

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transmitted from person to person. Pandemic declaration is announced by WHO when clear criteria for a pandemic are met. The reason for this announcement is that the disease factor that poses a threat to all countries, in other words, the new virus that has emerged somehow spreads easily from person to person. Considering the rate of spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its effect on human health, a pandemic has been declared in order to increase protective measures in general. It has been decided to take many measures in order to reduce the spread of the infection in the community and thus reduce the number of people who will be infected in the early stages of the pandemic and the cases that will arise due to the pandemic by applying infection prevention and control measures. These measures are protection and control measures for the source, for the way of transmission, for the healthy person. For example; restriction of population movements, implementation of quarantine, improvement of environmental conditions (disinfection), control of many private and public institutions, including the food and beverage sector (TÜBA, 2020) are within this scope. This situation has had a negative impact on food and beverage businesses as well as on many sectors that add vitality to social life and economy. Concern for health has led to the necessity of taking precautions. Consumers have also shown interest in cooking and eating at home instead of eating out. Since food and beverage businesses are also known to be a socializing environment for individuals, it is seen that restaurants are affected by restrictions such as "stay at home policy" and "social distance" implemented by governments in many countries during the pandemic process. In order to protect citizens from the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey and to prevent the spread of the pandemic, the activities of food and beverage businesses were stopped on March 21, 2020, providing only takeaway and ordering services without allowing consumers to sit and eat (Ministry of Interior of Republic of Turkey, 2020). As of June 1, 2020, food and beverage businesses have started to provide table service again. The main purpose of this research is to investigate whether foods and beverages beneficial for human health or strengthen immunity are included in the menu lists before and after the epidemic with the reopening of restaurants.

Food and beverage businesses are grouped into commercial (luxury, ethnic, etc. restaurants) and non-commercial (corporate and industrial) businesses. In this context, there are various differences between restaurants in the food and beverage industry.

Restaurants can also be classified according to factors such as their menu content, menu price, service quality and atmosphere (Top & Yarmacı, 2020). Fine dining restaurants, which are described as the concept of new restaurant, are restaurants with a high ambiance, inspired by the cuisines of countries, giving importance to creativity and serving small portions of food with high nutritional value accompanied by excellent service (Hwang & Ok, 2013). Fine Dining restaurants are restaurant types that are creative, influenced by world cuisines, serves with master chefs with strong artistic skills, where atmosphere and service are extremely important (Top & Yarmacı, 2020). In such restaurants, food is served in small portions for tasting. More organic and creative menus are created by preferring the use of local products.

The concept of Fine Dining restaurant is encountered for the first time in France. The restaurant in its present form was opened in Paris in 1765 by a Frenchman named Bouglanger. This name forms the basis for the development of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts for France. The first luxury restaurant was La Grande Taverne de Londes, opened in Paris in 1782 by Antoine Beauvilliers. In a good restaurant, it is of great importance that what dishes will be served and which beverage (wine) will be served in accordance with the menu. The development of Fine Dining restaurants could be examined in three time intervals; IX. century "Grand Cuisine" starting with Careme, "Haute Cuisine" at the beginning of XX. century and "Nouvelle Cuisine" at the last quarter of XX. century. The most important time period is the innovative kitchen movement known as "Nouvelle Cuisine", which started in the 1970s. In this period, the understanding of fine dining, which was integrated with the French, began to spread from France to the whole world. In 1827, the first chain restaurant business named Dolmonicos, which offers high quality menus to its guests at high prices, appears as fine dining in the United States (Akoğlu & Öztürk, 2018).

Fine dining understanding has changed over the past ten years. While menus from French cuisine were offered in previous years, today it interacts with different ethnic cuisines and a return to world cuisine is observed. It is seen that a modern, innovative change has been made in the menus, which is more suitable for today (Topal & Gök, 2020). The menus, which have been given an innovative shape, have a positive effect on customer satisfaction. The service provided is as important as the food served in Fine Dining restaurants. Due to the quality of the service and social values, the customer profile of these restaurants

consists of people with a high income level (Top & Yarmacı, 2020).

Fine Dining restaurant issue is not fully known in Turkey. Despite the fact that French cuisine serves food with small portions, Turkish cuisine consists of dishes that are flavored with larger portions without using sauce, which shows that Turkish citizens are far from concept and presentation. Today, the training of new chefs in the field of gastronomy and the possibility of accessing the menu all over the world thanks to technology increase the recognition and awareness of Fine Dining restaurants. In this direction, it is investigated whether changes have been made due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the menu lists of the restaurants in the status of luxury restaurants that comply with the concept of Fine Dining in Istanbul. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected countries with a health threat, has pushed people to take measures to strengthen their immunity, as well as to comply with cleaning, mask and social distance rules. For this reason, it is aimed to investigate whether food and beverages that will strengthen immunity are included in the preferred luxury restaurants, while the need of humans as social creatures for eating out is being met.

2. Conceptual Framework

Restaurant businesses, which have an important place in the food and beverage sector, would like to satisfy their customers, gain new customers and offer different services. Due to the increase in the variety of products offered, the effect of fashion and habits, and intense competition, businesses must always follow innovations and be dynamic. Until the end of 1980, the number of restaurants in Turkey was not very high. Due to their habits, Turks preferred to consume what they cooked at home instead of eating out. With the increasing number of restaurants and the affordable prices, people from all walks of life have realized their desire to eat out (Spang, 2000). In the commercial sense, people's consumption of food outside their homes includes the consumption of food and beverages produced and served by a business in a different location for a certain fee (Top and Yarmacı, 2020). Especially innovations in luxury restaurants, aesthetic and physical elements, warmth and comfort arising from the atmosphere make these restaurants attractive for customers (Birdir & Kale, 2014). In this context, fine-dining restaurant concept has started to be adopted by businesses in Turkey. Turkish cuisine, which has a long history, has changed due to many reasons such as the influence of the West, the mass media, and the change of the food industry. However,

Turkish cuisine should be able to preserve its existence and characteristics among other cuisines in the world, and its difference should be noticed (Güler, 2007). Turkish cuisine, which has an important place among world cuisines, aims to protect human health with some healing recipes. In this context, the countries of the world, which have been under the influence of an epidemic disease since March 2020, have developed various alternatives to combat the disease and brought up the benefits of consuming foods that will strengthen immunity until a vaccine is founded by scientists.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged for the first time in Wuhan, China and left the world under its influence in a short time, has also put international health authorities in action. In line with the instructions of the World Health Organization, national governments have taken various measures to protect public health and to get rid of the epidemic with the least effect (Acar, 2020). As of March 11, 2020, when the corona virus was first seen in Turkey, travel restrictions abroad began at first. Elit World, one of the world-famous hotel chains, temporarily shut down 6 hotels in Turkey and reduced the capacity of 2 hotels of it (Aylan, 2020). The anxiety, fear, and depression created by the COVID-19 pandemic have made both individuals and sectors, and therefore food and beverage businesses, uneasy. Its psychological, sociological and economic effects have been more and more felt by people who are social beings (Demir et al., 2020). Procedures such as preparation of social distance plan, use of hygienic materials and ventilation have been determined in mandatory applications in food and beverage businesses. In addition to the use of protective equipment by the personnel and general health control, rules have been determined on the issues such as cleaning in the kitchen, waste management, sterilization of dishes after washing, automatically opening sinks, disposable hand drying towels (Doğancılı, 2020). Among the measures taken by restaurants, there are factors such as increasing the distance between tables, using disinfectants, switching to digital menus, and contactless payment. For instance, while Amara World Hotel focused on providing food hygiene with non-contact buffet, ozonated water during the COVID-19 pandemic process, Faustina Hotel shared this process on their web pages by making applications such as temperature measurement and personal protective equipment including masks, visors, bones and gloves (Karamustafa et al., 2021). Another application that has changed and developed with the pandemic is that the use of information processing technologies such as

wireless internet and tablet menus instead of printed menus. As an alternative to the traditional menu, tablet menus have also started to become widespread day by day (Sürücü et al., 2018).

The facts that all inclusive system is abolished, and the food services applied as open buffet in the food and beverage departments are replaced with fixed menus with options expressed are among the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector in our country. In addition, technological applications were included in order to reduce contact at the point of check in/out service, closed packaged beverages and disposable packaged materials were offered instead of open drinks in bars and restaurants. Thus, efforts have been made to ensure that customers prefer businesses that take into account conditions such as hygiene and sanitation (Özdemir, 2020). When people's eating preferences are examined, it is observed that five factors are considered first. These issues are expressed as food quality, menu variety, price, atmosphere and convenience (Özdemir, 2010). Today, in addition to the importance of hygiene and sanitation brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, people's tendencies towards healthy eating are also increasing. For this reason, food and beverage businesses have tended to make some changes.

The method of the research conducted to examine The Changes with the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Menu Lists of Fine-Dining Restaurants in Istanbul in the Gastronomy Sector is given below.

3. Method

The aim of this research is to examine whether the menu lists have changed before and after COVID-19 in Fine-dining restaurant businesses operating in Istanbul. The results of the research give an idea about how pandemics affect food and beverage businesses. In addition, the research will provide information on whether the menu lists prepared by Fine-dining restaurant managers and chefs operating in Istanbul include immune system-boosting meals or not.

The ethics committee permission document required for the collection of data used in this study was obtained from Istanbul Ayrınsaray University Ethics Committee with the date of 28.10.2021 and the decision / issue number of 2021 / 09. In this study, the interview technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used (Okumuş, 2020).

In the research, findings were obtained with the opinions of 10 participants between September 6, 2021 and October 1, 2021 by using the interview technique

from 10 Fine-dining restaurant businesses operating in Istanbul. The participants whose opinions were taken consist of managers and chefs working in Fine-dining restaurants operating in Istanbul. Opinions of the participants were obtained by asking 10 semi-structured questions using the interview technique. The interview questions were created by the researchers using the literature and studies on Fine-dining. In order to ensure confirmability in qualitative research, the data of the research and the findings were obtained by noting the e-mail and telephone conversations due to the ongoing pandemic measures. In this qualitative applied research, descriptive analysis was made. In order to increase the validity of the research, the answers given by the participants are given in the form of direct quotations in the findings section.

The population of the research consists of 10 Fine-dining restaurants operating in Istanbul. The main reason for determining the population as Fine-dining restaurant businesses operating in Istanbul is that Istanbul has different qualities compared to other provinces in every aspect. These qualities are that level of income is high and Istanbul is a brand city. According to this, when the Istanbul tourism statistics report on the website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism dated July 1, 2020 is examined, it has been found that 155 restaurants of total 199 food and beverage businesses are in the first-class category and 44 of them are in the second-class restaurants. However, it has been determined that there is no data in the Fine-dining category in the statistics of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Turkey (2020), and statistical information about Fine-dining restaurants is included in luxury restaurants (first class-second class).

The population of the research consists of 10 fine-dining restaurant businesses, which are members of the Association of Tourism Restaurant Investors and Gastronomy Businesses and operating in Istanbul, selected by random method.

The researchers contacted directly with the businesses that make up the population. Interviews with 10 participants from 10 Fine-dining restaurant businesses that accepted the research were carried out by noting e-mail and phone calls due to the pandemic. The questions asked to the participants are given below.

- Was your restaurant able to operate due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- When were you open and closed due to the closure applied in the country?

- Have your staff had any health problems due to the pandemic?
- Have your staff quitted their jobs due to health problems?
- How has your business been affected by the pandemic?
- Have the menu lists been prepared considering the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Which food groups did you include before the pandemic?
- Which food groups have you included after the pandemic?
- Are there any special products that you use that are described as foods that will strengthen immunity?
- What are the arrangements made in the menus depending on the products that strengthen the immune system?

4. Results and Discussion

As seen in Table 1, 9 of the participants were male and 1 was female. Looking at their duties and positions, it is seen that there are 2 managers and 8 executive chefs.

First of all, the participants were asked, "Was your restaurant be able to operate due to the COVID-19 pandemic?". All participants answered this question: "Operation was carried out within the framework of the rules set by the state, package and pick-up service was provided".

The second question posed to the participants was "When were you open and closed due to the closure in the country?" Except for the P5, they all answered that "We were closed for 3 months as of March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic. Afterwards, takeaway and package services were started". P5 participant said, "We could not provide service between May 2020 and November 2020. In the following period, we continued to serve with a system where employees come to work alternately with short working hours."

The third question directed to the participants was "Have your staff had any health problems due to the pandemic?" P3 and P6 participants said, "Many of our teammates have health problems. For this reason, the company organized the way of working in groups of 2". The P4 participant stated that "No, it did not happen". Other participants, on the other hand, stated that "The staff were only rested due to the COVID-19 quarantine and contact, we continued to work in the remaining times".

The fourth question directed to the participants was "Have the employees quitted their jobs due to health

Table 1. Chefs and managers at fine-dining in İstanbul

Gender	Position	Participant Code
Male	Executive Chef	P1
Male	Executive Chef	P2
Male	Executive Chef	P3
Female	Manager	P4
Male	Manager	P5
Male	Executive Chef	P6
Male	Executive Chef	P7
Male	Executive Chef	P8
Male	Executive Chef	P9
Male	Executive Chef	P10

problems?" P4 said that "Staff did not come to work, there was no layoff, there was no one with covid". While the other participants answered, "There was no situation of leaving the job, but we tried to keep our colleagues with chronic illness away from the work area as much as possible, both in line with their own wishes and with the decisions taken. With the support of the state, we have survived most of this process without any loss of rights or grievances."

The fifth question directed to the participants was "How has your business been affected by the pandemic?" P4 said, "We have suffered economically much. Since the restaurant is located in a region with very high rents, namely in Etiler, government support was not received. Due to the pandemic, the landlord has not made any reductions in rent. Fixed costs; electricity, water etc. were paid regularly". P6 replied, "Our company spent the period with 70% turnover loss". Other participants said, "Of course, there was a financial loss during the closure period. Due to the closure of the workplace, some payments have decreased, but the slightest spending without any gain means expense. In the period we were open, it was a very troublesome process in serving with 50% capacity, but we can say that at least it was a bit of a breather for the system to be operational again."

The sixth question directed to the participants was "Have the menu lists been prepared considering the COVID-19 pandemic?" While the participants of P2, P3, P8, P9 replied, "We continued with our standard menus, we did not design a menu related to COVID-19", the participants of P1, P6, P7, P10 gave this answer "A few main foods and beverages were removed from the menu, but there was no product prepared by considering it". P4 said "Yes. Vegetables were especially included. New menu lists have been added to vegetarian and vegan menus." P5 said, "The menu lists continued without the need for a change at first."

Later, material losses and supply disruptions due to the low-capacity service situation pushed us to make changes in the menu. Another of the most important reasons for this situation was to prevent the employees from having problems during the operation as they continue to work in small groups on a rotating basis."

The seventh question directed to the participants was "Which food groups did you include before the pandemic?" P4 said, "As our restaurant is seafood, our main menu has remained constant. There was no change, only the variety of salads was increased", while the P5 said, "Our menu has a very rich structure, and it is possible to find products from almost every food group. We used to serve meat dishes, poultry, appetizers and salads, pasta and cereal dishes, and with very rich patisserie products". Other participants used the statement "There was no change in food and beverages before and after the pandemic".

The eighth question directed to the participants was "Which food groups have you included after the pandemic?" P4 said, "While we did not include avocado on our menu before the pandemic, we added avocado after the pandemic. We added three or four kinds of fruit juices", P5 said that "We did not make any changes in food groups, but we reduced the number of products on the menu considerably. We have removed our less preferred products from the menu, especially those that are costly and have difficult storage conditions. We continue on our way with the most preferred products, with which we can obtain a wide variety with less material, and which will not force our employees. Our aim is not to break the quality standards with both faster and uninterrupted service and a concise menu item". P6 replied "We mainly used protein products, olive oil, vegetables and salad products" and the other participants replied, "There was no change in food and beverage after the pandemic".

The ninth question directed to the participants was "Are there any special products that you use that are described as foods that will strengthen immunity?". While the P1 replied, "We especially recommended fresh ginger tea as an immune booster among our herbal teas"; P2 said "The foods on our menu provide important vitamins and protein for human health, so we did not search for a different one", P4 said "We bought fields and built a vegetable garden in Kilyos to include products that will strengthen immunity. We started to grow organic, natural products without using any fertilizer. We planted the seeds we bought from the swap seed festivals in Greece

Alexandroupolis and Turkey. We planted products such as melon seeds, pink tomatoes, zucchini, and corn, which are heirlooms", while the other participants gave the statement, "We did not use a special product on the menu".

The tenth question directed to the participants was "What are the arrangements made in the menus depending on the products that strengthen immunity?" P1 said "Generally, lighter food and beverages were brought to the fore", P2 said "We did not make any effort to make changes", P3 said "We focused on products like salad with quinoa, salad with flaxseed added, meat dishes marinated with rosemary, thyme, saffron rice and sherbet blended with special vinegar." P4 said "We always preferred to use natural products in our restaurant. Before the pandemic, for example, we had pink tomatoes brought from Tire. There has been a change in our lists for a vegetable-based vegan diet that will strengthen immunity after the pandemic. We have added quinoa salad varieties to our menu. We started to use flaxseed more". P5 said that "With the sensitivity we show to the quality of the products we use and to have a balanced distribution on our plates, we aim to protect people's health and maintain a healthy life, rather than just feeding them. This is one of the most important goals of our profession. In this sense, we do not have a product that we use in particular, but we are trying to include fermented foods, beneficial plants and foods with probiotic properties in our menu." P6 said "Our menus are always based on healthy products, we did not make any extra immune-boosting products during the COVID-19 period", P7 said "We especially used chili pepper, mint, thyme, turmeric, black pepper, ginger and cumin, P8 said "We included products such as homemade pickles, roasted peppers, ground balsamic, artichoke soup, celery with oranges", P9 said "We especially recommend minestrone soup. It was very popular with customers". P10 said "We included fermented products and fresh avocado-based fish products"

5. Conclusion

People have to eat to survive. Maintaining a healthy life is the most basic desire of every individual. Human being is a social being. While nutrition meets the biological need of satisfying one's hunger, feeling full and satisfying the stomach; the need and activity of eating also manifests itself in the form of socializing, cultural exchange, making friends and acquaintances, etc., and of the tendency to prefer places where the majority go. The current COVID-19 outbreak has led

people to spend time at home and become individualized. In order to protect people from the COVID-19 epidemic in Turkey and to prevent the spread of the epidemic, food and beverage businesses stopped their face-to-face activities on March 21, 2020. Food and beverage businesses have implemented only takeaway and package service with the decision taken by the government, without allowing their customers to sit in their venues. As of June 1, 2020, food and beverage businesses have started to provide table service again. The decision to close and reopen food and beverage businesses is a public policy decision. It has been determined that increasing food and operating costs due to the epidemic adversely affected food and beverage businesses.

Consumers have also been psychologically affected by the increase in the number of cases and death news along with the pandemic. Considering the situation of the pandemic, they were very selective in their choice of eating out and choosing a restaurant. While a return to the way of eating at home, as in the old times, has been observed for a long time, it has been determined that there is an increase in the sales of flour and yeast, which are market products, due to making pastry products at home, such as bread, cake, pastry, pies, donuts, etc. It has been observed that foods such as sourdough, household vinegar, fermented products, and pickles that strengthen the immune system are frequently used in the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this research, which was about the change of menu lists in the gastronomy sector with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were held with the chefs and managers of 10 Fine-dining restaurants in Istanbul. Results were obtained by using the interview technique in the questions asked to the participants in the research.

When the results of this research are examined in general, it is understood that the menus of Fine-dining restaurants, which constitute the population of the research, have not been changed much, but they have included some products that will strengthen immunity in their menus. In particular, the menus were improved without preparing different menu lists.

- Food and beverage varieties for vegan and vegetarian diets have been increased.
- Quinoa use, avocado use has increased.
- There has been an increase in the use of vinegar and balsamic vinegar.
- Spices such as chili pepper, mint, thyme, turmeric, cloves and cumin are especially emphasized both in meals and in salads.

- Flaxseed is used more in salads.
- Probiotic products are placed on the menus. The inclusion of kefir as a probiotic product in the menus along with ayran and yogurt has gained importance in terms of creating healthy menus. Thus, individuals started to prefer products that are healthier, containing vegetables and fruits, flavored with various spices, and fruit juices mixed with ginger, lemon, apple and carrot instead of pastry-based products.

When the results of this research are evaluated in general, it is understood that the restaurants serving as Fine Dining Restaurants in Istanbul did not make many changes in their menu lists due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, but they supported their menus with some small details. As a result of the feedback received from the businesses interviewed, it has been concluded that businesses have suspended their face-to-face activities due to the pandemic, they have suffered a loss of economic income and the menu lists have remained the same. Only when the reopening of businesses comes to the fore after full closure, it has been determined that the menu lists include some products that have an immune-boosting effect. The aim of the study is to provide data and be a source for some other research related to the subject.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial competing interests.

Author Contributions

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