Gilan Cafe: Svveet Home Iran

Sayfa - 5

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CITY BRIEF 05

ISTANBULEATS



Gilan Cafe: Sweet Home Iran

From istanbuleats.com

stumbled home from a day of managing wild middle schoolers and started to open the fridge for a medicating Efes Dark only to find a magnet near the handle that read, "Gilan Cafe, Iranian Cuisine. Kadıköv."

read, "Glan Cate, transan Cursine. Kadıköy."

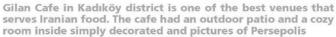
I did a double take. Yes, yes, it said Iranian. Iranian!
How long have I searched for a decent Iranian restaurant in Istanbul? The address was just up the road and so my fiancée and I hit the sidewalk and after about five measly minutes, found the unprepossessing little cafe tucked among the apartment buildings of the Actbadem neighborhood.

The cafe had an outdoor patio with heaters and a cozy room inside simply decorated with red tablecloths and pictures of Persepolis. Among Darius' ruins, a new display of framed newspaper clippings sang the praises of the little restaurant. In the background, Iranian music by the famous Persian musician, Hayde, played from a laptop manned by our waiter.

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We were soon met by Fetihan, a sharp, down-to-earth woman who had lived for 30 years with her Iranian husband in the Gilan province of Iran (thus the restaurant's name). "It was like the Iranian Black Sea," she told us. "With the blue water of the Caspian Sea in front of you and the





mountains at your back. Ahhh, a gorgeous place." We
ordered a starter of "Ashe
Doogh" – billed as "Ayran
Soup" in Turkish. It was a
hearty, creamy yogurt based
soup with tiny meat balls, fava
beans, rice, and a hint of herbs.
A swirl of bright green thyme
oil adorned the top. Fetihan also brought out a complimentary salad of mint, cucumbers
and tomatoes with a basket of
thin lavay bread.

thin lavaş bread.

For my main dish, I order "fesenjan," a rich walnut and pomegranate sauce over slow cooked köfte. My fian-cée goes with "ghormeh sebze," a creamy spinach-based dish that reminds me of In-

dian "saag." It has chicken, peas, and tiny köfte, with a rich sauce flavored with dill, cumin, and a diminutive Persian lime. "All of my ingredients from the spices to the lime come directly from Iran," Fetihan explains. "You can't find this kind of rice in Turkey." Unlike Turkish rice, our hostess tells us, Persian rice is cooked without oil because you are supposed to pour the sauces of your main dish on top. For drinks, we had Iranian ayran, a chilled version of Turkey's classic yogurt drink flavored with crushed herbs. It was light, creamy, and refreshing.





