

# ISTANBUL

MIXING TRADITIONAL RECIPES WITH MODERN COOKING TECHNIQUES, MAKSUT AŞKAR, EXECUTIVE CHEF AT NEOLOKAL RESTAURANT, BELONGS TO A NEW GENERATION OF CHEFS PIONEERING A FRESH TAKE ON ANATOLIAN CUISINE. THIS IS HIS ISTANBUL

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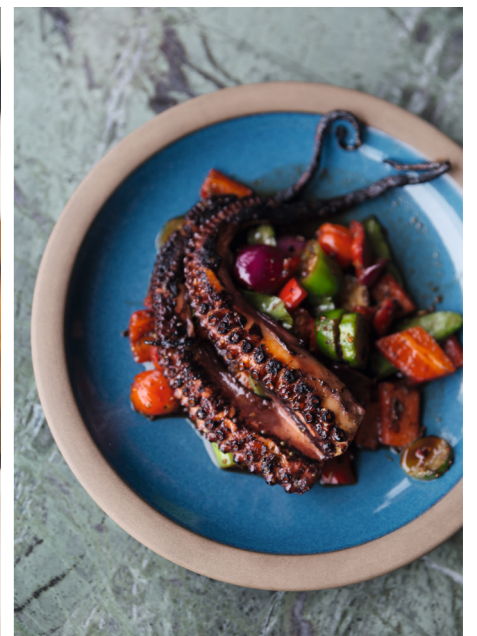




**MIKLA & MÜRVER** While Maksut Aşkar has achieved success by breathing new life into Turkey's precious culinary heritage, he's by no means the only chef doing this. High above the rooftops of Istanbul, Mikla is one of Maksut's favourite restaurants, and its chef Mehmet Gürs is a true pioneer, sourcing rare ingredients from around Turkey and exploring ancient cooking techniques in an attempt to revive historic Anatolian cuisine for the 21st century.

Meanwhile, at another of Maksut's favourites, casual eatery Mürver, chef Yılmaz Öztürk serves up a scrumptious spread of small plates prepared over an open fire – dishes such as octopus in ash and slow-roasted lamb with smoked pilaf.

Previous pages: Small plates to share at Neolokal; Above: Maksut at Neolokal; Opposite, clockwise from top left: Smoked veal tongue at Mürver; interior of Mürver; Mikla's contemporary take on balık ekmek, the classic fish sandwich, with hamsi tava (fried anchovies), bread and lemon; one of Mürver's signature cocktails, served in its lounge bar; 'octopus in ash' at Mürver; Anatolian raw milk cheeses and honey at Mikla; small bites to share at Mürver; preparations in the kitchen at Mikla; Mürver's wood-fired oven







Above: View of the city from Neolokal, featuring the Galata Bridge and the New Mosque; Opposite, clockwise from top left: Vendor at Şile Earth Market; catch of the day at the fish market in Şile; vendor with cut squash at Şile Earth Market; beetroots and turnips at Şile Earth Market; simitçi salesman carrying the traditional sesame pastry on his head; the fine art of serving Turkish coffee in evidence on the streets of Istanbul; street vendor selling roasted chestnuts; display of dried nuts and fruits at the Spice Bazaar; Maksut buying produce at Feriköy Organic Market

**STOCKING UP** On market days, locals gather for a morning chit-chat over a freshly baked börek (filled pastry) and a cup of çay (tea). While the Feriköy Organic Market and the Şile Earth Market both focus on local produce, a stroll around the Spice Bazaar opens up a world of dazzling colours and smells – expect countless piles of exotic seasonings and elaborate displays of dried fruits and Turkish delights.



**PREP TIME AT NEOLOKAL** Maksut learned how to cook by watching his mother and grandmother as a child. His dishes reflect his lifelong fascination for design, and often resemble intricate, colourful artworks.



Clockwise from top left: Preparations in the open kitchen at Neolokal; Maksut's lavender-infused octopus; applying the final touch to Maksut's sea bass with seafood sausage, celery cream and potatoes







**EVENING OUT** With the illuminated Istanbul nightscape in the background, diners at Neolokal are taken on a culinary journey. They can expect a menu full of innovation, with modern dishes rooted in tradition. No dish sums up this approach quite so dramatically as hummus, sculpted and plated up to mimic a Mesopotamian landscape. ●



Clockwise from top left: Diners at Neolokal enjoying the view of Istanbul; Neolokal's ambitious Hummus and Anatolian Landscapes dish; mutebbel, Maksut's colourful take on the classic Levantine dish, substituting grilled aubergine for seasonal vegetables