

SPILLING

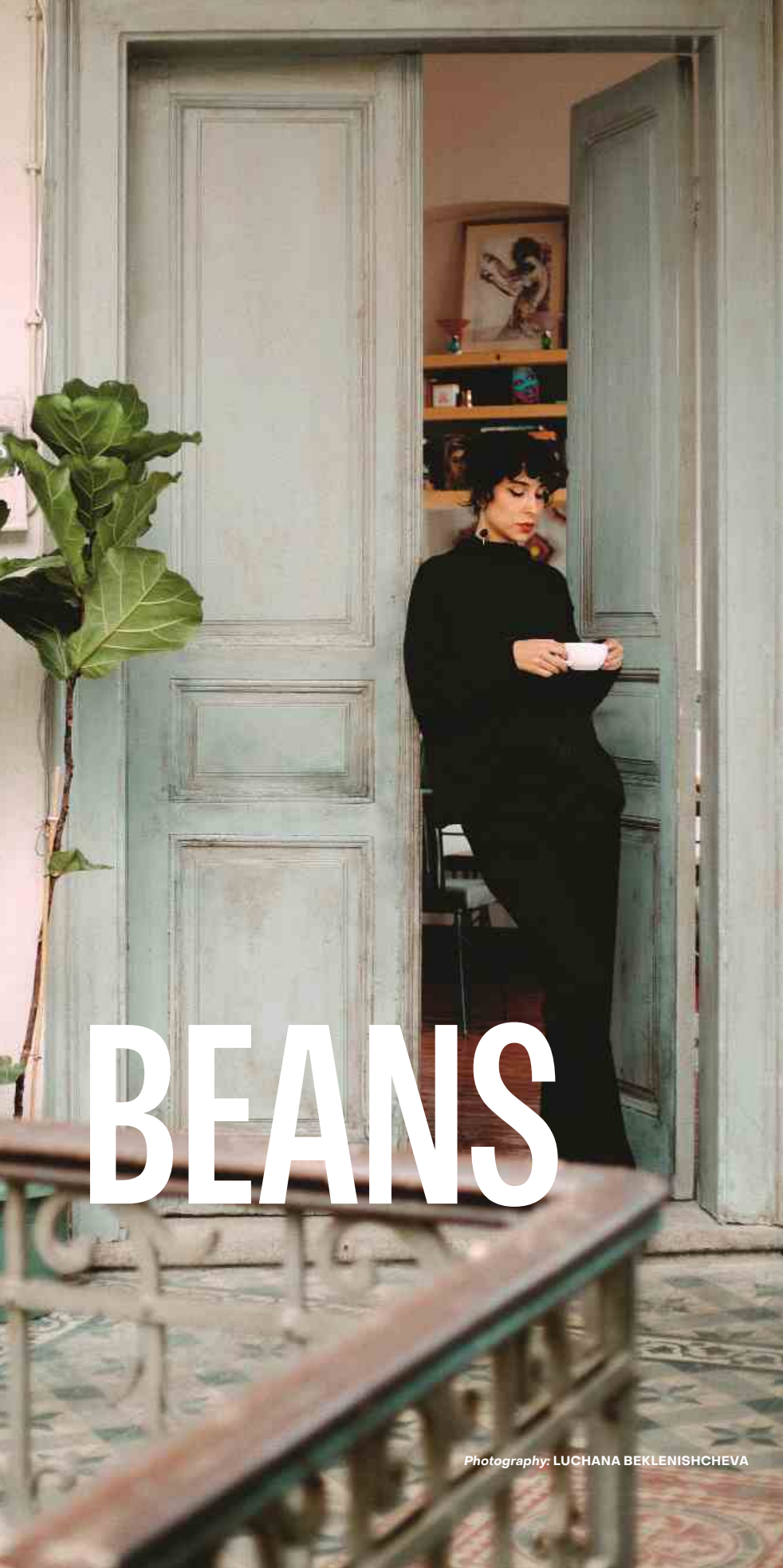
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Below and right:
There's an art
to making the
perfect cup.
Far right: Asli
Tapucu returned
from New York
to join the family
coffee business



We visit the Istanbul coffee shop that symbolises how Turkish coffee percolates through the country's culture

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hat first strikes visitors to Istanbul is an infectious, jubilant chaos: unpredictable lane-hopping traffic,

narrow cobbled streets packed with pedestrians, traders proclaiming their wares of dried fruits, spices and nuts. For coffee lovers, in particular, Istanbul is a paradise. Small neighbourhood spots, dessert houses with endless baklava and modern bookshops hosting students – all are filled with people sipping, discussing and laughing.

Coffee is absolutely embedded in Turkish culture. The world's first recorded coffee shop, dating back to the 15th century, opened in Istanbul – then Constantinople. Brought by Syrian traders, coffee beans came from Yemen. By the 17th century, it became an integral part of the Ottoman court, where the Sultan was served by his personal coffee makers. Coffee in Turkey has remained crucial to daily life, so much so that in 2013 UNESCO recognised Turkish coffee culture as part of its Intangible Cultural Heritage list. There's even a much-quoted proverb: 'The memory of a cup of coffee lasts for 40 years.'

Where should you begin your coffee journey in Istanbul? Start at Tahmis Sok, a street next to the Egyptian Bazaar (also known as the Spice Bazaar) in the Eminönü neighbourhood. Literally translated as 'Street of the Coffee', it's home to İhsan Kurukahvecioğlu Halefleri, a roastery established in 1871. Run by the same family for over 150 years, it produces 18 different blends from regions such as Brazil, El Salvador, Ethiopia and beyond.

To the shop's rear, housed in a charming Belle Époque building, stands a century-old cast-iron Probat roasting machine, wood-fired and still operated by hand. The entire process takes up to seven days. The roastery is one of Istanbul's oldest, using traditional methods imparting caramel, vanilla and maple flavours into their blends.

Aslı Tapucu, who returned from studying fashion in New York ▶

Best of the brews

MANDABATMAZ

An authentic coffee house in the Istiklal Caddesi district serving the very best brews. mandabatmaz.com

VELVET CAFÉ

This place has a vintage feel, with coffee paraphernalia through the ages, in the Balat district. [@velvetcafebalat](https://www.instagram.com/velvetcafebalat)

MINOA

Independent bookshop and café, with a few branches. We love the one near the famed Pera Palace Hotel. minoa.com

EMINÖNÜ DISTRICT BY EGYPTIAN BAZAAR

Istanbul Workshops hosts small group sessions in Turkish coffee-making. istanbulworkshops.com



Above: Each small serving of Turkish coffee invites you to relish its rich flavour
Right: The team at İhsan Kurukahvecioğlu Halefleri, which has been run by same family for 150 years

during the pandemic, now works in her family business. She is well versed in the ritual of making Turkish coffee, brewed in a small pot called an *ibrik* or *cezve*. One cup of water for every two teaspoons of coffee grounds. Sugar is optional, based on your preference. Place the pot on medium heat for four to six minutes until the foam rises – Turkish coffee should have at least 1cm of foam. It should also be served in small cups. It is to be savoured, not drunk quickly like espresso. Sipping one, I'm pleasantly surprised at its vanilla taste and aroma.

For Aslı, it is a labour of love. An artist through and through, her top-floor studio and rooftop terrace are a refuge from the hubbub, with a view of the bazaar below. 'I'm proud to run tasting workshops, make ink from coffee and then paint, it gives guests a unique experience.' Aslı smiles. 'Would you like your fortune read? I see great riches especially from across the seas – see this wave here?' To be honest, I couldn't. But it would appear the future of the roastery is in good hands. ■

For coffee and sightseeing experiences, contact GoTürkiye.gov.tr. goturkiye.com



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