

# ABOUT LAVASH

*The end. For beginning, see IRS-Heritage No. 4 (23)*



**A**zerbaijanis and other Turkic peoples make lavash both in the saj and in the tandir. Armenians have learned to make it only in the tandir.

In the book "Armenian cooking" A. Dubovis writes about the tandir, in which lavash and other dishes are made: "Tonir is the Armenian name for the oven common in the Caucasus, the Near East and Central Asia. Different nations call it tandir, tendir, tendyr, tondur, tonduri, tonir etc. (Through the Armenian tonir - also, through the Persian tannūr - also, from Arabic tönür - also: nūr - fire) (1).

Doctor of Historical Sciences V. V. Pokhlebkin said: "The South Caucasian and Central Asian tandir (tanur) and the Azerbaijani mangal give an opportunity to get a variety of dishes from the same products." (2, 5, 6)

Jemshid Bender notes in the book "Kurdish culinary culture and Kurdish dishes" that "the Arabic word tannur passed into Turkic". In India they also make dishes in the tandir, calling it "tandoori". (3)

Armenian author Tolita Ambartsumovna Khatranova writes in the book "Armenian cooking": "Lavash is baked

in the tonir. By the way, the ancient design of the tonir has reached our days and has not changed" (4).

Azerbaijanis are using the following types of tandir – chala (deep in the ground), in Turkey it is called guyu, doyma ("compacted, beaten") tandir, shirali tandir, badli tandir, goyma tandir, horma tandir, i.e. the tandir has passed a certain evolutionary path. First, they dug a hole – chala - in the ground, made a bonfire there, put meat in skin or in a stomach on the fire, etc., covered it with earth from the top and then made a bonfire again. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Arab author Al Garnati wrote about this method of cooking dishes by Azerbaijanis (6). Then they began to beat the walls of the tandir with a piece of wood and rammed it and connected it to a kulfa (duct), creating a doyma tandir (beaten). After this, they began to coat the wall with layers of clay (shira), creating the shirali tandir. (5, section "Armenian cooking") T. A. Bunyadov and D. G. Agayeva wrote in the article "On the methods of baking bread products in Azerbaijan": "According to archeological data, agriculture in Azerbaijan has been widely used since ancient times, i.e., in the Copper Age (4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC). And the preparation of the so-called "kullu komba" in shallow wells is the most ancient way of baking bread. Then they began to prepare "bads" - thick bundles of clay and placed the bad around the upper ground part of the tandir. When the earth was rocky and it was impossible to dig deep, bads were placed on each other and there appeared the badli tandir, and thus the process of bringing the tandir from the ground to the surface began and there appeared ground tandirs from baked clay or "horma" (laying), i.e. constructed from fire bricks. When there appeared ground tandirs from baked clay, they tried to put it on its side and there appeared ovens like "kura", and



№ 106 Торня (пекарня) въ Елисаветполѣ.  
Boulangerie à Elisabetpol.

*Bakery in Yelizavetpol (Ganja). Postcard of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century*

on clay hills they dug tandirs horizontally, and so on.” (7, p. 28-34). So, the tandir has passed a long evolutionary path, and all these types are still used in our cuisine.

Armenians took one type of tandir from this series and immediately made it “ancient Armenian”, “which has not changed at all”.

The form of the adopted hearth is one of the main determining factors in cuisine as a whole and in bread-making in particular. Along with the hearth tandir, the types of bread and meals that were made in it were also appropriated.

B. A. Gordonova and other authors note: “In the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, the Bronze Age began in the territory of Azerbaijan. The culture of agriculture reached a significant level and crafts began to stand out (metalworking, pottery, leather production and so on). Horticulture and viticulture in Azerbaijan had existed since the Bronze Age. Drawings and clay stamps for bread were found. Breadmaking in tandirs, which are prevalent in rural areas and even urban centers in our days, were also widespread. They baked more than 30 types of bread.” (8) 12<sup>th</sup> century Azerbaijani poets Nizami Ganjavi, Mashati Ganjavi, Khaqani and others repeatedly mention the tandir.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) wrote in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup>

century: “Bread must be clean, salted, well mixed and fermented, well-baked in the tannur, and daily. It should not be eaten without everything. The bread made in the tannur is followed by the bread made in the oven.” (9)

Azerbaijani scientist Mahmud Shirvani in the 15<sup>th</sup> century gives recipes for the “haris baked in the tandir, lentil dish in the tandir, sikhbaj in the tandir” etc. (10).

I. Berezin (1850) wrote: “The tender or more correctly tandir is a Dagestani or perhaps, general Muslim oven in which chureks are stuck to the inner walls and thus baked” (11).

Scientists often attribute the word “tendir” to Sumerian languages. Scientists read this language with the help of Turkic. In addition, there is the word “tindir” in the Azerbaijani language, i.e., “carbon”. When the tandir starts to burn, it gives a lot of fumes, especially when dung fuel is used. In addition, the mandatory element is a duct that goes from the bottom of the tandir to the side in the form of a tube. This duct in the tandir is called “kulfa” in Azerbaijani - from the word “kul ufan” - “one that blows the ashes”, which corresponds to the intended purpose. In the languages of other nations that use the tandir, this compulsory element is called “kulfa” or “kulba”. And the most ancient tandir in the Caucasus



was found precisely on the territory of Azerbaijan. In some areas, this word is pronounced as "Tannur", "Tanir", "like the light" or "like the sun". In Azerbaijani, tan (tyan) means similar and in Arabic nur means the sun, light. The words "tanur", "tonir" etc. in ancient texts are written only with consonants "tnr", which also reads as "tanra", i.e. similar to the sun god Ra. Since "tnr" is also read as "tanri", the word tendir is probably also associated with the name of the ancient Turkic chief god Tanri.

We established that the tandir is not an Armenian

invention and that they just took it from their neighbors. And bread and dishes from this hearth are therefore not Armenian either.

Wheat flour is needed to make lavash. And who grows wheat in the Caucasus? It should be noted that in the Caucasus the necessary raw materials for cooking were mostly produced by Azerbaijanis. Georgian scientist M. I. Tkeshelev wrote in the article "Azerbaijani Tatars" in 1888: "Azerbaijanis living in the Irevan province almost always occupy scenic spots, where a river flows, while Armenians are living in mountainous areas" (12). He also writes about the business of the Azerbaijani population: "In the villages they are involved in grain farming, agriculture and horticulture, of course, in low-lying land, because Azerbaijanis are mainly living on the banks of rivers and can be called agricultural people. We can say that Azerbaijanis almost constantly live on the banks of rivers, whereas Armenians live only in the mountains." (12)

L. K. Artamonov noted in 1889: "Armenians direct their activities mainly at trade and accumulation of wealth. Azerbaijanis, accordingly, directed their activities in their places of residence at agriculture and animal

*In Azerbaijani villages, lavash is made according to old recipes*



husbandry and are the main productive element in the Caucasus.” (13)

I. L. Segal noted in 1902: “The Muslim people mostly live on the banks of the rivers Bazarchay, Ayrichay, Bargushad, Okhchuchay, Choundurchay, in their tributaries, as well as on the banks of the Aras; the Armenian population lives in a scattered state in the harsh mountain tops. Because of indigence, a very large number of Armenian men (from 15 to 40) go to work on the shores of the Caspian Sea, in Baku and Tiflis

every winter. Here they are attracted by lackey service and street life. As far as Azerbaijanis are concerned, they live in the plains and in the best farming conditions.” (14) The fact that Khatranova quotes historian J. S. Iashvili also confirms this: “Aissors and Tatars (meaning Azerbaijanis – T. A.) of the Yerevan province constantly consume clean wheat bread. Residents of the low-lying parts of the province often use meat and dairy products... (Azerbaijani residents in the lowlands – T. A.), and the use of alcohol is not developed



*Lavashana - a traditional sour additive to dishes*

among them, and alcoholism is much less common there" (5, p.7).

As you can see, people did not drink, because it was mainly a Muslim population. Khatranova writes on page 57: "They say that the Armenian khash is so good that even a dead drunk man becomes sober, healthy and happy eating a plate of this soup. And that is why on the third day of an Armenian wedding all guests are treated to the khash" (5). That is to say Armenians drank alcohol.

This, of course, is a natural process. As other people arrived, all the fertile lands had already been populated and used by the local population. It was also noted by N. N. Shavrov, who was engaged in issues of the colonization of the South Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "The point of view was established that there were not free or suitable places for Russian colonization. But the absence of such land did not serve, however, as an obstacle to the resettlement of about a million Turkish Armenians in the Caucasus" (15). This is confirmed by Armenian scientist G. A. Ezov (1908): "The new homeland did not welcome the Armenians very warmly, there was very little public land. Most of those who settled in the littoral provinces died from the effects of the harmful climate." (16) And this is also confirmed by Khatranova: "Pastures in Armenia are mainly mountainous - just for the sheep. Keeping domestic pigs is somewhat more complicated, there is not enough space. There were cows too, but in small quantities." (5)

Notes by travelers, scientists, merchants, diplomats and others, as well as archaeological excavations prove that Azerbaijanis had been growing wheat, oats, rice, sesame, soy, beets, melons, watermelon, grapes, apples, pomegranates, quince and other products of agriculture, melon and gourd growing and horticulture in

these lands since ancient times. These products as well as fresh and dried fish, caviar, butter, and other animal husbandry products were supplied not only to the local population. All this was exported to neighboring, close and distant countries.

It is undeniable that all the Caucasian markets were provided with products of cattle-breeding and crop production made by Azerbaijanis for centuries.

All the errors of Armenian authors are contained in the book we mentioned "Armenian cooking" written by a number of Armenian scientists, academicians, doctors from different branches of science and approved by the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, where we read: "Some of the recipes given in this book are old. For many years, they were not only not recorded, but the population of the republic did not cook them" (17, p.20). That is to say there were no written sources on these recipes and people did not cook them. Thus, eminent Armenian scientists admit that these dishes are simply did not exist in classical Armenian cuisine. Where did the dishes in this book come from?

This is what the authors of the book write on this subject on page 19: "This book describes the rational foundations of Armenian cuisine and provides recipes for 400 dishes **compiled by experienced chefs, scientists, engineers and housewives** (emphasized by me – T. A.)" (17, p.19)

Doctor of Historical Sciences L. B. Artyunyan writes in this book: "The Armenian people, also as a result of mutual influences, **appropriated the culture of the surrounding nations**. This broad influence affected the nature of food, **changing** for centuries, and finally obtained its distinctive national identity." (17)

And other researchers argue that Armenian cuisine has taken a lot from Turkic cuisine, for example, J. M. Novozhenov, A. T. Tityunnik and L. N. Sopina write: "We can find a lot of similarities between Armenian and Bulgarian national cuisine, which, in turn, borrowed a lot from Turkish cuisine." (18) This is confirmed by Armenian authors, including Armenian scientists Khatranova, who also says: "Turkish cooking **greatly enriched Armenian cuisine**." (5)

Again, let's get back to the book "Armenian cooking". On page 20: "Some recipes given in this book are old. For many years, they were not only not recorded, but the population of the republic did not cook them. (Simply put, these dishes did not exist – T. A.). To restore ancient

cooking, special teams were sent to cities and villages of Armenia (in the 1960s the villages were mostly populated by Azerbaijanis – T. A.), and with the help of members of the public they studied the history of Armenian cuisine and restored many of the dishes and their terminology” (17). That’s it! They restored those dishes with the help of the population that did not cook these dishes. They “restored” history in the same way with the help of the population.

What is said in the same book on page 19 is closer to the truth: “The book contains about 400 recipes of dishes compiled by experienced chefs, scientists, engineers and housewives.” (10) Who are they?

The scientist compiling the recipes, engineer, technologist, main specialist, author of the book is the S. I. Mesropyan. This is the Mesropyan, who collected and studied recipes of Azerbaijani cuisine for many years and published the book “50 Azerbaijani Dishes” through the Scientific-Research Institute for Trade and Public Catering of the USSR Ministry of Trade in 1940. (19) In the future, he included all he learned in the new book “Armenian cooking”, which he got “approved” by the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. (17)

Following the Armenian tradition, the name of Mesropyan was “thrown out” of the 1985 edition as he was no longer needed. In addition, they removed other “witnesses” too: the names of artists Y. I. Batov, Y. G. Dneprov and L. Ya. Tereschenko disappeared from the book, the names of photographers I. V. Kapustyanskiy and G. D. Petrenko, who had taken most of the photographs, disappeared too because they were not Armenians, and the name of the photographer Nalchadjan was also removed. The 1985 edition contained the same pictures but R. M. Hambartsumyan was named as the author of the photos. This is a kind of gratitude at the state level, since all of these books, as is written in the book, were “approved by the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR and the Ministry of Trade of the Armenian SSR”.

Yes, the authors of the recipes are also nameless “housewives”, who lived in the villages and were expelled from there in 1988, when hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were expelled from their native lands.

This is how the basic book of Armenian cuisine, which mentions “lavash”, was created. Thus, by its history, raw materials, hearth and terminology, lavash is not Armenian. ❀

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