
One of the Best 900: Tablo Restaurant

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Essen, Germany- One of Germany's most important centers of coal and steel production, Essen is leaving the typical identity of a manufacturing city behind. Chosen as a cultural capital of Europe, every corner of the city has turned into a large construction site. Essen's population numbers 600,000 and it plays host to the headquarters of 10 of Germany's largest 100 firms.

It is located in the Ruhr region and is also the sixth largest city in Germany. For many years, Turkish workers flocked here for factory jobs, but lately Essen has become the scene for many Turkish entrepreneurs.

Gastronomy is a favorite among Turkish businessmen. Although there is always a steady stream of restaurants that open and close or change hands, one restaurant that has maintained stability in the eating and drinking life of the city is Tablo Restaurant.

One of Essen's two Turkish restaurants is Tablo, although you can't immediately understand that from its design or architecture. It's only when you peruse the menu that you can comprehend its cuisine.

The restaurant's owner, Yilmaz Do an, is 38 years old (although he looks 25) and has been involved in the gastronomy sector since 1993. The restaurant, which has a seating capacity of 135, was, in 2004, 2005, and 2006, chosen by the well-respected French gastronomy guide Gault Millau as one of the top 900 restaurants in Germany. There are currently more than 100,000 restaurants operating in the country while there are 15,000 Turkish döner vendors called "imbiss";.

The average price of a dinner per person at Tablo, which employs 17 people, is around 25-30 Euro and Do an states that this is an average price for good restaurants. Around 90 percent of customers at Tablo are German. Do an's eventual goal is to expand the restaurant into a chain.

Managing a restaurant in Germany necessitates serious capital. Opening an upscale restaurant requires roughly 500,000 Euros. A large amount of the responsibility in such a restaurant lies with the chef. However, one of the biggest problems Turkish restaurateurs face is being able to bring chefs from Turkey to Germany, which is no longer as easy as it used to be. Do an points out that the laws have made it harder to hire chefs from Turkey.

Tablo Restaurant also offers apprenticeships to culinary students wishing to enter the profession through their technical schools. The students attend classes at school twice a week and then spend their apprenticeships at Tablo three days of the week. Do an states that not every restaurant offers such apprenticeship opportunities to students.

OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSIC LINES

Born in the Besli district of Ad1yaman, Yilmaz Do an opened Tablo Restaurant to customers five years ago. 'When the words "Turkish restaurant" is uttered, people automatically think of kebab and döner', states Do an, who goes on to explain his design. The sleek, modern designs of the restaurant fit his desire to work outside of the clichés of typical Turkish restaurants in Germany. 'I was a classic restaurant customer. At every restaurant I went to I tried to think of what the customer wants, what their expectations are, as a customer myself.' He has also used Ad1yaman region cuisine in his menu. He has been married for fifteen years and has two children. (October 2007, Issue 26th)