

MAKSUT AŞKAR

Maksut Aşkar, born in İskenderun and raised in Antakya, studied tourism and hotel management in Istanbul while simultaneously working in restaurants and bars. This sparked a passion for food design, leading to "edible art" endeavors at museums, galleries, and events, as well as consultancy projects for major food and beverage brands. His journey as a chef began in 2007.

He owned three restaurants before opening 'neolokal' in 2014, within the cultural institution SALT Galata. Inspired by his multicultural upbringing and the flavors of his childhood, he modernizes classic Anatolian recipes to ensure their future relevance and to safeguard traditions. He is also the co-founder of Foxy, a Michelin Bib Gourmand-awarded bistro featuring local, natural wines. He recently brought his take on Anatolian cuisine abroad with the opening of 'O Anatolian Cafe & Bakery by Maksut Aşkar' at the Fenix Museum in Rotterdam.

Awards:

- Michelin Star and Green Michelin Star (2023, 2024, 2025)
- The World's 50 Best Restaurants: No. 63 (2023), No. 91 (2024)
- Gault & Millau: 4 Toques (2024, 2025)
- Gault & Millau: Restaurant of the Year (2024)
- Gault & Millau: Best International Chef (2025)
- The Best Chef Awards: 2 Knives (2024)

Maksut Aşkar studied tourism and hotel management both in high school and university. He worked in the food and beverage industry during and after his studies, which led him to develop a passion for taste design. He reflected this passion in various projects, transforming the tastes he designed into art exhibitions. He also consulted for and designed events for many major food and beverage brands and entities. His journey as a chef started in 2007.

After refining his craft in the kitchen and through his first three restaurants, he opened his latest establishment in the SALT Galata Museum, where he brought Anatolian cuisine into the modern spotlight. The motto he had previously used became the name of his restaurant, 'neolokal.' With modern takes on Anatolian cuisine, he creates deeply emotional experiences for guests, drawing on Maksut's childhood and emotions, as well as the roots and traditions of this geography. He believes this embodies the true essence of Anatolian cuisine.

In 2014, he was awarded 'The Best Chef of the Year' by Time Out Magazine. In 2015, he received the 'Le Proche' prize during the 10th anniversary of Omnivore Paris. His restaurant, neolokal, was featured in the Discovery Series in 2018 and ranked No. 110 in The World's 50 Best Restaurants

awards in 2019. neolokal was also ranked 145th in 2020, 121st in 2021, 106th in 2022, and 93rd in 2023 in the Europe Top Restaurants list by OAD. In 2022, the restaurant was awarded a Michelin Star and a Michelin Green Star. In 2023, neolokal ranked No. 63 in The World's 50 Best Restaurants awards, and he was named 88th Best Chef of the Year by the Best Chef Awards. He also represents his cuisine and philosophy at various international events around the world.

Maksut Aşkar, born in İskenderun, also received culinary training during the years he studied tourism and hotel management, preparing him for his professional career. He worked at various establishments, including Q Jazz Club, Emporio Armani Café, Hillside City Club, and served as a manager at Nupera, a multi-venue food and beverage establishment.

Maksut Aşkar shared his 'edible art'-themed works and designed flavors in exhibitions, both group and solo, with art enthusiasts. He provided flavor consultancy for many brands, conducted events with food styling, and designed menus. As a lecturer at universities and culinary schools and a speaker at various panels, Maksut Aşkar shares his experiences with young people who, like himself, pursue their dreams.

He is the chef and co-founder of the restaurant 'neolokal,' located in the Salt Galata Museum, and a partner at Foxy Nişantaşı, a local and natural wine bistro in Istanbul. With modern takes on Anatolian cuisine, Aşkar delves deeply into the hearts of guests who experience neolokal with refined family cooking, incorporating not only his childhood and emotions but also the roots and traditions within this geography, which he believes embody the true Anatolian cuisine.

He perceives himself as an artisan who is always thinking about the future. Together with his team at neolokal, they focus on the seasonality of their produce as well as the soil's cycles to create memorable experiences for their guests. Moreover, sustainability for neolokal is about creating a better tomorrow by integrating traditions from the past into today's world and the future. He embraces cultural and social sustainability. This is how Maksut Aşkar creates a connection between the soil, the neolokal team, and their guest community.

As the chef and founding partner of the neolokal restaurant, he earned 1 Michelin Star in 2023, 2024, and 2025, along with the Green Michelin Star. At his establishment in Salt Galata, he offers magnificent flavors with his artistic, minimal, and modern interpretation of Anatolian cuisine. neolokal, awarded a Michelin Star, is also recognized with the Green Michelin Star for its environmentally friendly and ethical gastronomic approach.

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İskenderun'da doğup Antakya'da büyüyen Maksut Aşkar, lise ve üniversite yıllarında turizm-otelcilik eğitimi aldı. Bu süreçte çalıştığı restoran ve barlarda başlayan lezzet tasarımı tutkusu, zamanla 'yenilebilir sanat' sergilerine, marka danışmanlıklarına ve etkinlik projelerine evrildi.

2007 yılında şeflik kariyerine başlayan Aşkar, üç restoranın ardından 2014 yılında SALT Galata binasında yer alan neolokal'i kurdu. Çocukluk anılarından, çok kültürlü kimliğinden ve bu toprakların zenginliğinden beslenerek, geleneksel Anadolu reçetelerini gelecekte de kabul görecektir şekilde güncelliyor, çağdaş teknikler ve rafine sunumlarla servis ediyor.

Aşkar, ekibiyle birlikte yalnızca lezzeti değil ait olduğu coğrafyanın hafızasını ve mutfak mirasını da korumayı amaçlıyor. Pişirme ve muhafaza teknikleri, mevsimsellik, toprakla ve üreticiyle doğrudan ilişki gibi kadim bilgileri sosyal ve kültürel sürdürülebilirlik bağlamında ele alıyor ve mutfağında uyguluyor. Aynı zamanda İstanbul'daki Foxy Nişantaşı'nın kurucu ortaklarından olan Aşkar, son olarak Rotterdam'daki Fenix Müzesi'nde 'O Anatolian Cafe & Bakery by Maksut Aşkar' adıyla yeni projesini hayata geçirdi.

Ödüller:

- 1 Michelin Yıldızı ve Yeşil Michelin Yıldızı (2023, 2024, 2025)
- The World's 50 Best Restaurants: No. 63 (2023), No. 91 (2024)
- Gault & Millau: 4 Torques (2024, 2025)
- Gault & Millau: Yılın Restoranı (2024)
- Gault & Millau: En İyi Uluslararası Şef (2025)
- The Best Chef Awards: 2 Knives (2024)
- Michelin Bib Gourmand / Foxy Nişantaşı (2024, 2025)