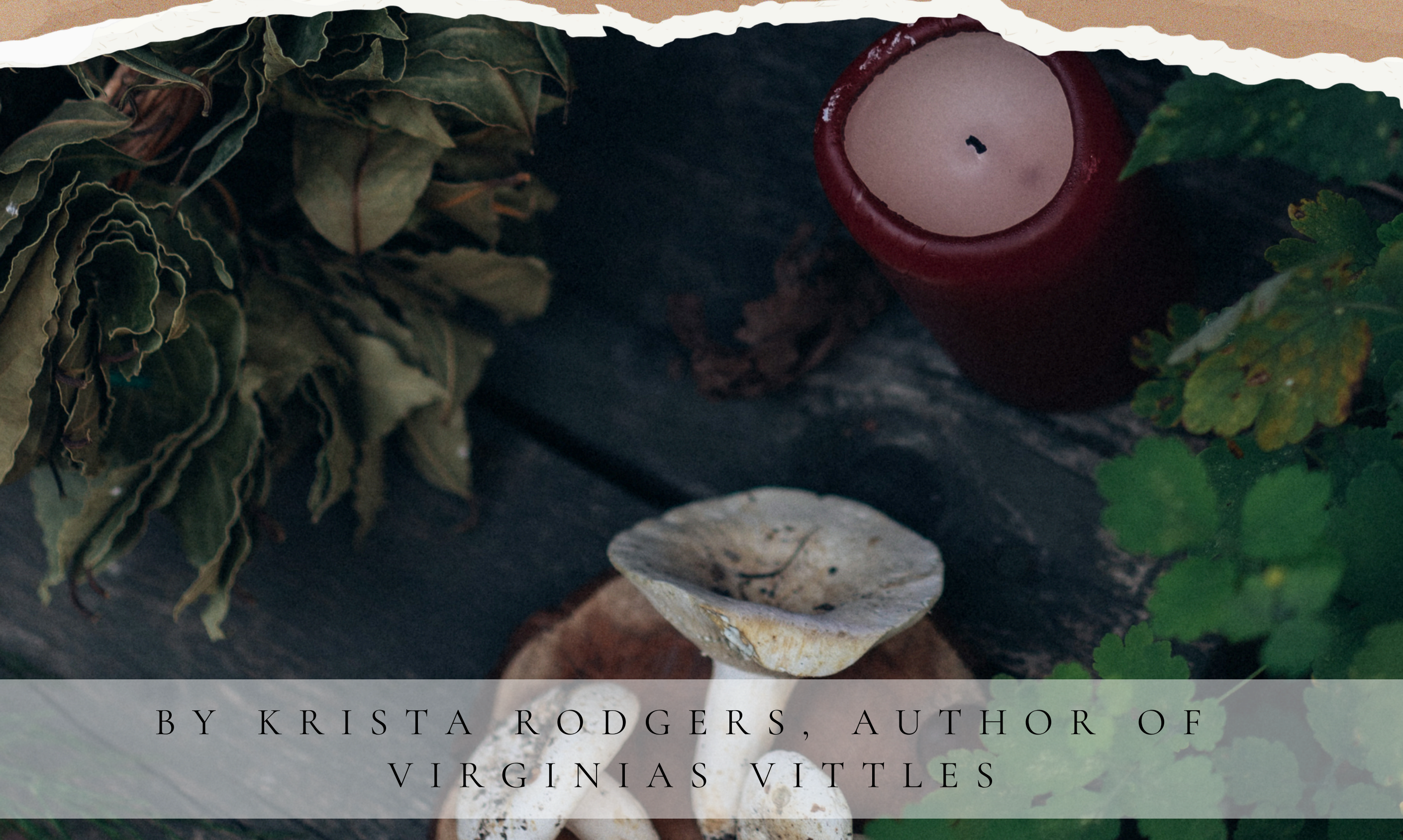




THE SUMMER

— kitchen apothecary —

FIVE TRADITIONAL TURKISH
KITCHEN REMEDIES FOR HOT
WEATHER



BY KRISTA RODGERS, AUTHOR OF
VIRGINIAS VITTLES

Before We Begin

For centuries, kitchens were medicine cabinets.

Long before pharmacies existed, families reached for yogurt to soothe burns, mint for upset stomachs, cucumbers to cool overheated skin, and herbal infusions to survive long summers.

Others have been passed from one generation to the next because families found them comforting, nourishing, and worth preserving.

This guide shares simple, food-based practices that are inexpensive, accessible, and worth knowing.

These remedies are meant for everyday discomforts—not emergencies. If symptoms are severe or persistent, seek medical care.



Ayran: The Original Summer Sports Drink

If you've traveled through Türkiye in the summer, you've probably seen people drinking ayran alongside grilled meats, fresh vegetables, or even after a long walk in the heat. This simple combination of yogurt, water, and salt has refreshed people across Anatolia for centuries.

Why generations have used it

Ayran is cooling, satisfying, and helps replace both fluids and sodium lost through perspiration. Unlike sugary beverages, it delivers protein while remaining remarkably light.

Kitchen Wisdom

In many Turkish homes, ayran is served with watermelon, grilled vegetables, börek, or kebabs. The combination is simple, refreshing, and deeply rooted in summer meals.

In Türkiye, ayran is often considered an essential component to a summer meal.



What we know today

Yogurt contains protein and beneficial bacteria, while the added salt helps replenish sodium after sweating. Together, they make ayran an excellent choice after gardening, hiking, or spending time outdoors.

How to Make It

Ingredients

- 1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold water
- Pinch of sea salt

Whisk until smooth and lightly frothy.

Serve ice cold.

Optional:

- Fresh dried mint
- A few ice cubes



Gul Serbeti: A Cooling Rose Drink with Ottoman Roots

Long before soft drinks existed, Ottoman kitchens prepared fragrant fruit and flower sherbets to cool the body during hot afternoons.

Rose sherbet remains one of the most elegant examples of this tradition.

Why generations have used it

Rose has long been associated with cooling qualities in Middle Eastern and Anatolian traditions. Whether or not every traditional belief is supported by modern research, the drink itself encourages hydration and offers a gentle floral aroma that's especially refreshing on hot days.

What we know today

Hydration matters more than almost anything else during summer. Drinking water flavored with herbs or flowers often encourages people to drink more throughout the day.

Kitchen Wisdom

Ottoman kitchens created dozens of seasonal sherbets using rose, violet, tamarind, quince, pomegranate, and sour cherry. Each reflected the rhythms of the seasons and local harvests.

During the Ottoman period, elaborate sherbets welcomed honored guests and marked celebrations, making hospitality as important as refreshment.



Simple Rose Sherbet

Ingredients

- 4 cups cold water
- 2 tablespoons food-grade rose syrup or rosewater (adjust to taste)
- Juice of one lemon
- Honey, if desired
- Ice

Garnish with fresh rose petals (unsprayed) or mint



Mint Lemon Tea: A Cup for Hot Days (Yes—Hot Tea!)

It may seem surprising, but many cultures with very warm climates enjoy hot herbal tea throughout the day.

Mint and lemon have become one of the simplest and most comforting summer combinations.

Why generations have used it

Fresh mint has traditionally been enjoyed after meals and during periods of digestive discomfort, while lemon contributes brightness and encourages hydration.

What we know today

Peppermint may help relieve occasional indigestion in some people, and warm beverages can support relaxation and fluid intake. The real benefit comes from staying hydrated consistently throughout the day.



Optional additions

- Chamomile
- Fresh sage
- Thyme blossom honey

Kitchen Wisdom

Many Turkish families simply gather a handful of whatever is growing in the garden—mint, lemon balm, thyme, or sage—and steep it into a daily herbal infusion. The recipe changes with the season, but the ritual remains the same.

How to Make It

Ingredients

- Large handful fresh mint
- Juice of half a lemon
- 2 cups boiling water

Steep for 5–7 minutes.

Serve warm, or chill and pour over ice.

Linden and Cinnamon Tea: A Cup to Slow Down After the Heat

When the day finally begins to cool, many Turkish kitchens put the kettle on. A pot of ihlamur—linden blossom tea—signals that it's time to unwind.

Adding a cinnamon stick lends gentle warmth and sweetness, creating a comforting infusion that's fragrant without needing much sugar.

Why generations have used it

For centuries across Anatolia and the Balkans, linden blossoms have been brewed as a soothing evening tea. It's traditionally enjoyed after long days, during seasonal changes, or whenever a moment of calm is needed.

What we know today

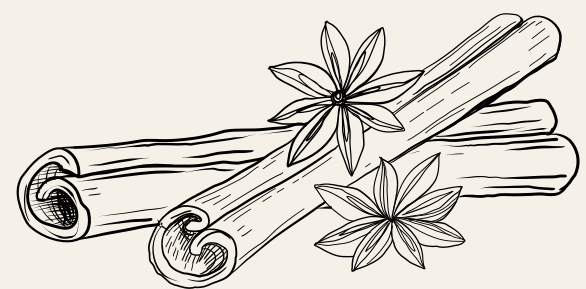
Linden tea is naturally caffeine-free, making it a relaxing choice any time of day. While more research is needed on many traditional uses, warm herbal teas can support hydration and create a calming ritual that encourages rest and relaxation.

Kitchen Wisdom

In many Turkish households, ihlamur isn't just a tea—it's an invitation to pause.

Seasonal Note:

If you're feeling overheated from the day, let the tea cool slightly before drinking, or brew it ahead of time and enjoy it chilled over ice with a slice of lemon for a refreshing summer variation.





How to Make It

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon dried linden blossoms (or 1 tea bag)
- 1 small cinnamon stick
- 2 cups freshly boiled water
- Honey, if desired
- A thin slice of lemon (optional)

Place the linden blossoms and cinnamon stick in a teapot or mug. Pour over the hot water and steep for 8–10 minutes. Strain if using loose blossoms.

Serve warm with a drizzle of honey or a squeeze of lemon, if desired.

Street markets across Türkiye fill with bundles of fragrant dried ıhlamur each autumn, ensuring families have enough for the year ahead.



Pekmez: Molasses

Anatolia's Ancient Fruit Syrup

Long before refined sugar found its way into Turkish kitchens, there was pekmez—a rich syrup made by slowly simmering the juice of grapes, mulberries, carob, figs, or other fruits until it thickens into a naturally sweet concentrate.

For centuries, families have prepared pekmez during the autumn harvest, preserving the sweetness of fresh fruit to enjoy throughout the year. Today, it's still a beloved staple at breakfast tables across Türkiye.

Why generations have used it

Pekmez has traditionally been valued as a nourishing source of energy, especially for farmers, laborers, growing children, and anyone needing a quick, satisfying bite. Its naturally occurring sugars provide readily available energy, and it also contains minerals such as iron and calcium, though the exact amounts vary depending on the fruit used.

Kitchen Wisdom

One of the most cherished pairings in Turkish cuisine is tahini and pekmez. The creamy richness of sesame balances the deep sweetness of the fruit syrup, creating a breakfast that's both comforting and deeply rooted in Anatolian food traditions. Many families still begin winter mornings this way, but it's just as delicious spread on toast or spooned over yogurt with fresh summer figs.

Seasonal Tip:

Try drizzling a teaspoon of grape pekmez over chilled Greek yogurt with sliced peaches or figs for a simple summer breakfast that celebrates the season's fruit.

What we know today

Because pekmez is made by concentrating fruit juice, it delivers natural sugars along with small amounts of vitamins and minerals. It's a flavorful alternative to refined sugar, but like any sweetener, it's best enjoyed in moderation.

How to Enjoy It

Classic Turkish Breakfast

Mix together:

2 tablespoons tahini

1 tablespoon grape pekmez

Swirl gently rather than fully mixing, and serve with warm bread, fresh fruit, walnuts, or toasted sesame seeds.

In many villages, making pekmez is still a community event that celebrates the grape harvest before winter arrives.



My Favorite Summer Ritual

When I'm having rice and grilled meat, I will almost always make a cacik: yogurt, grated cucumber, garlic, salt, and mint.

It's inexpensive, refreshing, packed with probiotics, and comes directly from generations of Mediterranean cooking that understood how to eat with the season. Sometimes the oldest recipes remain because they work.



Let's Stay Connected

If you enjoyed this guide, you'll love what comes next. Join our newsletter for:

- Seasonal recipes
- Traditional Mediterranean remedies
- Turkish cooking lessons
- Wild herbs and edible plants
- Live cooking events
- Kitchen history and food stories

Sign up at:

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K R I S T A
R O D G E R S

Welcome to Virginia's Vittles

Food has always been more than recipes to me.
It's memory.
It's hospitality.
It's culture.
It's the way we care for one another.

At Virginia's Vittles, I share Turkish recipes, Appalachian traditions, seasonal ingredients, and kitchen wisdom that helps us slow down and reconnect around the table.

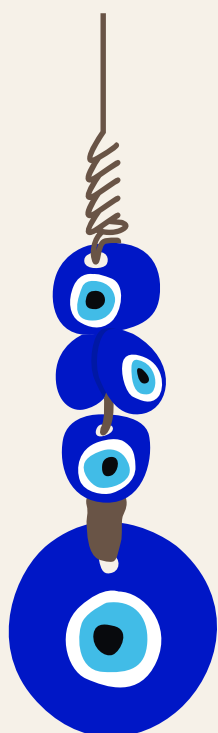
If that sounds like home, I'd love to cook with you.

Virginia's Vittles brings together my lived, learned, and inherited food traditions.

Here, you'll find:



- Turkish recipes for everyday cooking
- Seasonal, local, and accessible ingredients
- Simple herbal remedies and kitchen traditions
- Stories that honor both Appalachia and Anatolia
- Classes and resources that help you cook with confidence and connection



Afiyet Olsun

May this guide contribute to your health.

— *Krista*