

Mehmet's Ottoman Eggs

We were honoured to be given 'soğanlı yumurta' for breakfast while staying with Mehmet and Kadar Demirci at their eco-lodge in the foothills of the Kaçkar mountains. It was one of the best breakfasts we had in Turkey – the lightly caramelised, meltingly soft onions went superbly well with the eggs, which were of course directly from their chickens in the coop next to the little outdoor kitchen.



Literally translated as 'oniony eggs', soğanlı yumurta is an old Ottoman recipe – the sultan's favourite breakfast no less. Mehmet also told us that according to the original version, the onions should be slow-cooked for six hours, as was presumably done by the breakfast team in the sultan's crew of a thousand cooks at Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. You might think that's asking too much of your Sunday morning. But do give it at least half an hour – it'll be worth it.

Serves: 2 to 4 for breakfast

Time: 40 mins or more...

2 very large yellow onions (more if they're smaller)

plenty of butter

salt

4 eggs

bright red chilli flakes, preferably Maraş pepper

1. Peel, halve and then thinly slice the onions.
2. Heat a generous knob of butter in a frying pan, add onions and a good pinch of salt and stir to coat onions in melted butter.
3. Cook over low heat for at least half an hour. The idea is to end up with totally soft onions which are beginning to caramelize, but are not yet *too* brown and sweet. They should not be crispy at all. You may find it helps to cover the pan for some of the cooking, or to lay a round of parchment paper over the onions. Stir occasionally.
4. Taste and add more salt if you wish, then make 4 indentations in the onions and crack an egg into each 'nest'.
5. Continue to cook until the whites have set but the yolks are still runny.
6. Sprinkle some chilli flakes over to garnish and flavour. Alternatively you could use sweet paprika, black pepper or chopped parsley.
7. Serve immediately with bread or toast.