



Grape escape

A charming Bosphorus boutique hotel offers romantic R&R and great food away from the madding crowds of exciting Istanbul

Words **Andy Harris** Photography **David Loftus**

Beneath the shadow of Istanbul's imposing Bosphorus Bridge, Sumahan On The Water is a very classy boutique designer hotel, carved out of an old 19th-century raki distillery. Situated in the sleepy village of Çengelköy famed for its crisp and crunchy cucumbers, its affable owners, Nedret and Mark Butler, two Turkish and American architects, have lovingly restored the building and gardens with great panache. Stay there and you feel a world away from the city's chaotic traffic jams as you make use of their private launch to ferry you to nearby Kanlıca, known for its cafés serving thick yoghurt and honey, or simple fish restaurants along the Bosphorus with perfectly grilled sardines, sea bass and salad.

Some would say it's better to simply chill out at the hotel's Tapasuma Restaurant, a romantic candlelit spot by night serving excellent dishes, such as the delicious cherry dolmas (see recipe right) created by talented chef Gökay Çakıroğlu. Known for its exciting hot and cold Turkish-style tapas, there's an array of brilliant Ottoman food to try: Circassian chicken, bean and mussel pilaki, courgette flowers stuffed with seafood and herbs, octopus and shrimp salad, anchovy borek and icli kofte (meat and bulgur stuffed kibbe), all washed down with perfectly chilled Turkish wines and raki, of course. ●

Sumahan On The Water (Kuleli Caddesi 43, Çengelköy, +90 216 422 8000, sumahan.com). Tapasuma in the hotel grounds has a separate entrance (+90 216 401 1333, tapasuma.com).

CHERRY DOLMAS

Makes about 30

- 150ml olive oil
- 400g onions, chopped
- 40g garlic, chopped
- 100g pine nuts
- 50g currants, soaked in water for 30 minutes
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 100g granulated sugar
- 200g dried cherries
- 225g short grain rice
- 100g mixed chopped flat leaf parsley and dill
- 500g green vine leaves in brine, rinsed and drained, plus extra
- 1 large tomato
- Lemon slices, to serve

1 Heat 100ml of oil in a frying pan over a medium heat and fry the onions, garlic and pine nuts for 10-15 minutes, until coloured. Add 100-125ml of water and cook for 15 minutes, until soft. **2** Stir in the currants, spices and sugar, add another splash of water and cook for a further 10 minutes, until most of the liquid is reduced. **3** Mix in the cherries and rice, pour in 450ml of

water and season. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed. Then stir in the herbs.

4 Cut any stems off the vine leaves and lay them out, vein-side up. Spoon cherry mixture down the centre, fold in the sides of the leaf, then roll tightly into a cigar shape. Repeat with the other leaves.

5 Line the bottom of a large pan with extra vine leaves. Place the dolmas in a concentric circle on top, in layers if needs be.

6 Grate in the tomato and add enough cold water to come up to the top of the dolmas. Place a plate on top and weight with a jar.

7 Bring to the boil over a low heat, then simmer for 30 minutes, topping up with a little water if necessary. Allow to cool, then carefully transfer the dolmas to a plate.

8 Serve with sliced lemon and drizzle over the remaining olive oil.

Per dolma 158 cals, 7.6g fat (0.9g sat fats), 2.9g protein, 19.7g carbs, 10.8g sugars

Clockwise from top left: Courgette flowers stuffed with seafood and herbs; Tapasuma chef Gökay Çakıroğlu; making cherry dolmas; the finished dish; the hotel's launch; Tapasuma tables.

